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MOSAICS OF THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLD

KATHERINE M. D. DUNBABIN



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Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World

This book provides a comprehensive account of mosaics of the ancient world from the early pebble mosaics of Greece to the pavements of Christian churches in the east. Separate chapters in part I cover the principal regions of the Roman Empire in turn, in order to bring out the distinctive characteristics of their mosaic workshops. Questions of technique and production, of the role of mosaics in architecture, and of their social functions and implications are treated in part II. The book discusses both well-known works and recent finds, and balances consideration of exceptional masterpieces against standard workshop production. Two main lines of approach are followed throughout: first, the role of mosaics as a significant art form, which over an unbroken span illuminates the evolution of pictorial style better than any comparable surviving medium; and secondly, their character as works of artisan production closely linked to their architectural context.

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Title page illustration: detail, mosaic of musicians, Mariamin. Courtesy J. Balty.

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Preface

WHEN, IN the mid-1960s, I first became interested in late Roman mosaics as a topic for a doctoral thesis, it was an eccentric choice. In the English-speaking world Roman Art was little studied in those days, and it seemed incredible that the humble genre of mosaic pavements could be accorded the same sort of scholarly attention as was given, for example, to Greek vase-painting. Indeed the existence of the later centuries of the Roman Empire was itself barely recognised as a part of the discipline of Classics; the ensuing thesis was in fact submitted for the degree of D.Phil. at Oxford to the Faculty of Modern History, the material being deemed a couple of centuries too late to qualify as Ancient History. It would have seemed even more incredible then that thirty years later the annual Bulletin of an international Society devoted to the study of ancient mosaics (AIEMA) would exceed in size the *Année Philologique* of those days.

While this increase in interest can only be gratifying to those who have devoted themselves to this aspect of ancient art and artisanship, it is equally clear that to write a book about mosaics now is a very different task from what it was then. The mass of material and the pace of its publication – in both senses – impose ever greater challenges on the scholar. The questions that are asked of the material are new and more complex. It is probably presumptuous for any one person to pretend that she can control all the publications dealing with the Graeco-Roman world in its full geographical and chronological breadth. I have tried as best I could to see for myself the mosaics about which I have written, and to visit both museums and excavations old and new in most regions of the Roman Empire; inevitably there are gaps, and there have been many occasions when I have arrived at sites, only to find the mosaics covered over, or the museum closed. On the other hand, not a few of the mosaics that I did once see have now suffered irreparable decay or have disappeared for ever.

But presumption may be thought at times to be justifiable. Despite the interest in mosaics, which has led to so many individual publications or regional corpora, there has been a dearth of syntheses which attempt to

look at the whole course of the development of the art form. The difficulties mentioned above have been sufficient to discourage scholars perhaps more prudent than I from so rash an undertaking. But the result has been that students of the ancient world have no easy access to an important expression of ancient culture; mosaics remain little known outside a circle of specialists, particularly in the English-speaking world. This is the gap that I set myself to fill, rashly or otherwise, more years ago than I now care to remember. I completed work on the text in 1996; in a few instances, it has been possible to take account of publications that came to my attention since then.

In the process I have incurred debts to those scholars who have shown hospitality in welcoming me to excavations and museums, who have answered questions, discussed problems, and given me copies of their publications, as well as to a great many other individuals, sometimes anonymous, who have afforded much needed assistance in the course of my travels. I am especially grateful to all those, from more than twenty countries, who have furnished photographs or have granted me permission to publish them. It is impossible to acknowledge here by name all who have assisted me in these many ways. The institutions and individuals that supplied the illustrations used in this book are given in the list of illustrations, and I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all of them once again for their co-operation and helpfulness. While it is invidious to single out individuals from among very many who have helped me in so many ways, I would wish to acknowledge especially the assistance and encouragement given by Janine Balty, Demetrios Michaelides, Roger Wilson and the late Margaret Alexander over many years. Without these friends and colleagues this book would not have been written, and without their help it would have more imperfections than it has.

I have benefited over a number of years from the experience of teaching a graduate course on mosaics, and in the process I have learnt a great deal. I am grateful to those students whose questions caused me to rethink and

clarify some of my most dearly held prejudices. To these students and former students who have worked as research assistants I owe a more specific debt: Michael Garmaise, John Tamm, Alexis Young, Guy Chamberland, Zographia Welch, and Bridget Day, for their assistance in the genesis of this book. Thanks are also due to David Meadows for his computing and graphics skills, and to Tanya Kane for preparing two drawings.

No book like this can now be written without the support of those institutions whose munificence alone permits scholarly research to be undertaken and published, especially under the increasing constraints that beset academic life. I acknowledge with much gratitude the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada during the long period that it has taken to write this book. It would not have been possible to provide the essential colour illustrations but for

generous publication grants from the Millard Meiss Publication Fund, the Dr M. Aylwin Cotton Foundation, and the Arts Research Board of McMaster University. I am also grateful to the staff of the Ashmolean Library for much help over the years. Pauline Hire of Cambridge University Press has shown patience and wisdom and provided constant encouragement over the protracted gestation of this book; to her, to Caroline Bundy, and the rest of the editorial staff at Cambridge University Press, my warmest thanks.

Above all, I owe the completion of this book to my husband, William Slater. It is a cliché to say that the work could not have been completed without his help; in the particular circumstances of the final months of work on it, it is the simple truth.

*Ancaster, Ontario
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Introduction

MOSAICS ARE among the most durable forms of decorative art to have survived from antiquity. They appear first in the Greek world in the form of pavements using natural pebbles set in a bed of plaster or mortar; the earliest decorated examples in Greece belong to the late fifth century BC. The more familiar form, composed of small near-cubic pieces of stone (known as tesserae) set into mortar, was developed in the Hellenistic period between the third and second centuries BC; it was adopted in Rome and Italy, and spread in the following centuries throughout the Roman Empire. Pavements of this type have been found by the hundred thousand in buildings of the Roman period from northern Britain to Libya, from the Atlantic coast to the Syrian desert. They are sometimes regarded as one of the identifying features of Roman presence in an area, so closely is the peculiar technique associated with the spread of Roman culture – although it is occasionally also found outside the actual limits of the empire. The basic structural character of mosaics and the technical methods of laying them remained constant once the use of tesserae had developed, with only minor changes throughout the centuries into the early Middle Ages. Their appearance, however, could vary enormously, ranging from plain monochrome floors through simple designs in two colours, usually black and white, to the most elaborate of polychrome geometric patterns, to designs based on floral and vegetal motifs, and to figured scenes. These in turn could range from simple designs using isolated figures to highly ambitious narrative compositions. Mosaics could also serve as the support for written texts, ranging from single words to quite lengthy verses.

The study of mosaics accordingly permits a variety of approaches. On the one hand they are artisan works serving a practical function, closely linked to their architectural context. Wherever possible they should be studied within that context, as a constituent part of a building: the mosaic removed from its setting and exhibited in a museum, often on a wall instead of its original location on a floor, has lost much of its essential character. On the other hand they constitute a significant art form in

their own right, one that illuminates the evolution of pictorial, figurative and ornamental style and composition over an unbroken span of more than one thousand years. Given the fragmentary nature of our evidence for most comparable media, above all for most of the development of major painting during this period, this continuity itself offers an invaluable contribution to our knowledge: in no other branch of the pictorial arts is it possible to follow through hundreds of examples the development from the late Classical period to the late Antique. Moreover the figured scenes offer an extraordinary range of information about the visual culture of those who commissioned them. The majority of mosaics are found in domestic contexts, and belong to the realm of the private and quotidian rather than that of official state-commissioned art; not infrequently they can be seen as reflections and conveyors of the social preoccupations and interests of their owners.

The opening chapters of this book contain a predominantly diachronic study of the evolution of mosaics; starting with the appearance of pebble mosaics in Greece, they cover the development of the mosaic of regular tesserae and the extraordinarily fine pictorial mosaics that aim to imitate the effects of painting, which are characteristic of the Hellenistic period. These forms were adopted in Italy in the late second and first century BC, alongside locally established forms of pavement. Around the turn of the first century BC to the first AD a huge expansion in the use of mosaic took place in Italy, changing it from a comparatively rare luxury craft to a much more mass-produced and widely diffused form. Workshops multiplied, not only within Italy but in the provinces of the western Roman Empire, where the use of mosaics was introduced in the course of the first and early second centuries AD, presumably at first by immigrant Italian craftsmen. This diffusion brings an end to any unitary development, and it becomes possible to distinguish regional trends and styles, though cross-fertilisation between different areas persists. In the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire the picture is further complicated by the survival of Hellenistic traditions into the second and third centuries

AD, and their gradual transformation both by fashions from the west and by other elements. The bulk of part I is therefore organised on geographic lines, with chapters focusing on broadly defined regions. Inevitably I make no attempt at complete coverage, and some major regions are omitted: I have not included, for instance, the Balkan provinces, nor Egypt and Cyrenaica in the Roman period. Mosaics have certainly been found in these regions, but at least in the present state of our knowledge they do not appear to contribute much that differs significantly from the picture presented elsewhere.

Many of the regions discussed in part I had indigenous traditions of art of their own, which under the Empire survive in media such as sculpture or metalwork, and alongside products of more direct classical inspiration. Mosaic, on the other hand, in its fully developed form using cut tesserae, is an idiosyncratic technique unknown in most regions until it was introduced from the Graeco-Roman centres; very specific training was needed in order to practise it. This results in a remarkable degree of uniformity in some aspects of the craft; a common ornamental vocabulary, and to a large extent a common repertory of figured scenes, was utilised throughout this vast area. There is almost no sign of the use of the mosaic technique for representations of subjects of identifiable indigenous origin. On the other hand there are substantial differences between the regions: groups of workshops within a region developed their own favoured combinations of motifs and designs, their own methods of treating them; the materials locally available impart distinct characteristics to the finished products; and patrons clearly varied in the type of subjects and designs that they preferred to commission. One of the main aims of part I is to bring out the nature and range of these regional variations within the standardisation imposed by the common technique.

I have not attempted to impose a single terminal date on the discussions within these regional chapters, but have tried to find a natural closing point within each region. In parts of the western empire, the barbarian invasions of the fifth century AD brought to an end the style of comfortable Romanised life in which buildings were decorated with mosaics and craftsmen trained to produce them; in other areas the traditions lingered on, but with definite signs of decline. In parts of the eastern empire, on the other hand, no natural break or terminal point can be found before the seventh century or even later; the traditions remained vigorous and production extensive. New elements appeared in late antiquity, both in the form of

stylistic transformations and of the different requirements imposed by the use of mosaics in Christian churches; but these blend with the earlier traditions to make this one of the most vital and interesting periods in the history of the craft. Even the Arab conquests of the seventh century did not bring the tradition to an end immediately; the spectacular mosaics of the palaces of the Umayyad Caliphs in Palestine and Jordan attest to a final flowering.

Thus far the object of the discussion has been exclusively the use of mosaics for pavements. The application of mosaic to walls and vaults is a Roman invention, distinct in its origins and main development from floor mosaics, although the two related art forms naturally overlap and influence one another. Accidents of survival mean that it is very much less well attested than the more durable floor mosaics, and there are substantial gaps in our knowledge of its development. I have devoted one chapter (14) to it down to the fourth century AD; but here I have not attempted to include the much better known manifestations of the art in early Christian churches. Although these too, of course, grew out of pre-existing traditions and continuity can be traced in many aspects, nevertheless they are better left as a separate topic. Another chapter (15) treats a distinct but related technique, used on both floors and walls: that known as *opus sectile*, in which pieces of marble or other materials are cut to the shape of parts of the design. This was almost certainly executed by different craftsmen from mosaics, and was clearly regarded as a more prestigious form of decoration; but there are enough links between the two forms to make it desirable to include it in this book.

Part II studies the mosaics under broader thematic headings, which aim to set the developments studied in part I more fully into the context of commission and production. Successive chapters cover the craftsmen and their organisation, technical aspects of production, the nature of the repertory and its means of transmission, the relation between the mosaics and their architectural settings, and the patrons who commissioned the works. Many aspects of these topics have had to be treated more briefly and selectively than would ideally have been desirable, many more require further study; some of the most interesting recent research on mosaics has been devoted to questions such as these, but much remains to be done. Within the limits imposed both by the state of current research and by the scope and nature of this book, it is my

hope here to emphasise that variety of approach to the study of mosaics to which I referred at the beginning of this introduction.

The study of mosaics is beset by serious problems of chronology. Comparatively few mosaics are dated at all closely on external grounds. In Christian churches, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, it was a fairly common practice to write the date of construction upon the mosaic itself; but outside this specific category such absolute dates are very rare. Even where such apparently incontrovertible evidence is present the matter is not always straightforward: it is possible that the date given may be that of a repair, or of a later insertion into a pre-existing pavement, rather than that of the original construction. Mosaics from controlled excavations may be dated by the evidence of stratigraphy; but even where it has been possible to excavate beneath the level of the mosaic, the material recovered surprisingly seldom offers more than approximate upper and lower limits, *termini post* and *ante quos*. Mosaics from older excavations, or those found in circumstances where it has not been possible to carry out careful stratigraphic investigation, normally lack even these. Dates based on such factors as the foundation or destruction of a city, and similar broad historical events, can clearly give only wider limits still; moreover the fallacy of regarding events such as the sack of a city as necessarily implying its abandonment or the end of all construction is now better appreciated than it used to be.

Where external evidence is lacking recourse must be had to internal criteria. The dangers of stylistic dating are well known, and it is often misapplied; the dates proposed on stylistic grounds for some especially problematic (because unparalleled) monuments may diverge by one or two centuries, occasionally even more. A craft such as mosaic, which on the one hand is highly traditional, but on the other depends upon the very varying levels of skill of its practitioners, can be especially misleading. Most experts now admit that figured scenes in particular were often closely based upon earlier models, and could therefore preserve characteristics from periods long before their actual creation. On the other hand it has been increasingly recognised in recent decades that

the ornamental patterns used on mosaics offer a much more promising basis for distinguishing chronological development, especially if they are studied within a narrow regional context. Individual workshops and groups of workshops developed their favourite patterns, selecting and combining familiar motifs, elaborating or simplifying; the study of these patterns allows sequences to be established and relative chronologies proposed. However two caveats should be noted concerning such studies. First the regional nature of the evolution must be stressed: conclusions reached in one part of the Roman world cannot be freely transferred to another. And secondly, any dates proposed on such a basis should be left within broad limits: certainly no closer than within a quarter or a third of a century, often broader still.

In a book of this scope, it is obviously not possible to go into chronological questions of this sort in detail. Where a generally accepted date for an individual mosaic or a complex exists, I have given it. This is not an appropriate occasion for radical attempts at redating, though I have sometimes indicated if I find the conventional dating doubtful. I have tried to make readers aware of the nature of the evidence, external or internal, on which proposed dates are based, and to acquaint them with controversies; bibliography which will allow those who wish to pursue the question in greater detail is given in the notes.

Note on modern scholarship

Mosaics were long regarded by archaeologists and historians of ancient art as a minor and insignificant branch of art, of interest chiefly as evidence for lost works of ancient painting.¹ New developments, forming the foundation for modern mosaic studies, began essentially in the 1960s, with the holding in 1963 of the first in a series of International Colloquia on Ancient Mosaics (CMGR 1), and the founding of the Association internationale pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique (AIEMA).² At much the same period began the publication of series of regional corpora (sometimes continuing work started early in the century), which aimed at the complete publication of all

the eighth at Lausanne in 1997. Six (CMGR 1–VI) have been published to date. The more-or-less annual *BullAIEMA* contains full bibliographic coverage of mosaic publications, especially valuable for new discoveries, together with reviews and occasional articles.

¹ Among conspicuous exceptions are the works, still basic today, of Marion Blake on the Italian mosaics (1930, 1936, 1940); Pernice on the mosaics of Pompeii (1938); and above all Doro Levi on the mosaics of Antioch (1947).

² Successive International Colloquia have followed at regular intervals;

mosaics from a given site or geographic region, from the simplest and most fragmentary to the most elaborate.³ Most parts of the Roman world have since seen the launching of similar projects, though coverage to date remains very uneven. Another major project has been the attempt to classify the ornamental designs found on mosaics and to standardise the terminology used in five European languages to describe them.⁴

The bibliographies at the end of each chapter are intended to introduce non-specialist readers to the principal catalogues, corpora, and monographic studies of the

³ See bibliographies for individual chapters. The first volume of the Corpus of mosaics of Gaul (*RecGaulle* 1.1) was published in 1957 by Henri Stern, to whose initiative was also due the foundation of AIEMA and the holding of the first International Colloquium in 1963.

mosaics discussed in that chapter, with emphasis on recent works. For the benefit of students some additional books and articles in English are included, and reference is given to especially well-illustrated works. Specialised bibliography for individual mosaics or for specific themes and problems is given in the notes. There have been very few recent attempts to provide an overview or synthesis of the history of mosaics that goes beyond the individual region, but two short works by French scholars provide useful introductions, of value especially for the individual approaches taken by their writers.⁵

⁴ *Décor* (1985): see ch.18, n.1. It refines and expands the publication, *Répertoire graphique du décor géométrique dans la mosaïque antique* (*BullAIEMA* 4, 1973), which proposes a terminology only in French.

⁵ Ph. Bruneau, *La mosaïque antique* (Paris 1987); H. Lavagne, *La mosaïque (que sais-je?)*, Paris 1987).

PART I: Historical and regional development

Origins and pebble mosaics

THE ORIGINS of decorative mosaics in Greece have been much disputed. Earlier theories traced them back in the east as far as the coloured cones of terracotta used for wall decoration by the Sumerians at Uruk-Warka in the fourth millennium BC;¹ but a search for so distant a derivation has long been discarded, and the technique may rather be seen as an indigenous development in Greece. Floors paved with plain or coloured pebbles set into clay or plaster are found there from a very early date; the practice probably arose wherever suitable materials were available from riverbed or seashore. Simple examples of such floors are found in Crete as early as the Neolithic period, and were used by both Minoans and Mycenaeans; on one late Mycenaean example, from a house at Tiryns, the pebbles are set to form a rudimentary pattern.² After the Bronze Age there is a gap in our knowledge, and undecorated pebble floors appear next in temples and sanctuaries of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, for instance in the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, and the Temple of Athena Pronaia at Delphi.³ In the latter, pebbles of several colours are combined indiscriminately, but there is no sign of the use of patterns on such floors at this date. On the fringes of the Greek world, however, patterned pebble floors were in use earlier among peoples with whom the Greeks were in contact. They have been found at Gordion in Asia Minor, in three houses of the Phrygian period dating from the late eighth century BC. In the best preserved, the west Phrygian House, dark blue, dark red and white pebbles were laid in a clay bed to form a variety of geometric motifs without any overall design.

These include several chequer patterns of squares, and many motifs which later formed a standard part of the mosaicists' repertory: simple meander, lozenges, rosettes, the swastika. Later buildings at Gordion show the tradition continuing in the sixth and fifth centuries; the patterns now were clearly laid out in repetitive chequers and meanders.⁴ Other examples of pebble floors with simple patterns dating from the eighth century have been found further East, at Altintepe in eastern Anatolia, and in the Palaces of Arslan Tash and Til Barsib in Assyria.⁵

The earliest decorated mosaics to survive in Greece date from the late fifth century BC. It must remain doubtful whether they were influenced by the early examples of decorated pebble mosaics in Asia Minor and Assyria; an independent evolution is perhaps more likely. Although precise dates are often lacking, there are enough which possess *termini* established on archaeological or historical grounds to permit a general outline of their development. The largest group consists of the pavements from the New Town at Olynthos in northern Greece, founded in 432 BC, and destroyed by Philip of Macedon in 348; these general limits may be accepted for the mosaics.⁶ Other early examples come from the Peloponnese, from Attica and Euboea; there is no reason to assign their invention to any one region of the Greek world. The earliest stage is represented by a mosaic from the Centaur Bath in Corinth, a building constructed in the last quarter of the fifth century⁷ (figures 1, 2). The centre of the floor is occupied by a large, four-spoked wheel, the spaces between the spokes alternately

¹ E.g. Gauckler 2090-1, followed by many later authors. For the Uruk-Warka mosaics, cf. A. Parrot, *Sumer* (London/New York 1960), 67, figs.84a-b; M. Brandes, *Untersuchungen zur Komposition der Stiftemosaiken an der Pfeilerhalle der Schicht IVa in Uruk-Warka* (BaM Beiheft 1, Berlin 1968).

² C. Podzuweit, D. Salzmann, 'Ein mykenischer Kieselmosaikfussboden aus Tiryns', *AA* 1977, 123-37; Salzmann 5, 114 no.129.

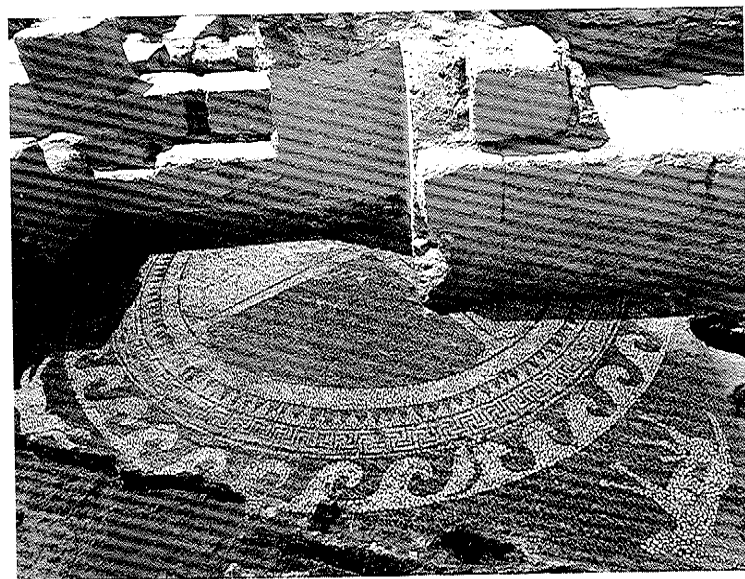
³ R. Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta* (London 1929), 6-7; R. Demangel, *FdD* 11, 3, *Le Sanctuaire d'Athéna Pronaia 1, Les Temples de Tuf* (Paris 1923), 16, fig.22.

⁴ R. Young, 'Early mosaics at Gordion', *Expedition* 7.3, 1964/5, 4-13; Salzmann 6-7, 93-4 nos.46-56, for the dates.

⁵ Salzmann 4, 82 no.5, 84 no.15, 114 nos.127-8, with refs.

⁶ *Olynthus* 5, 13-14; *Olynthus* 8, 1-17, 287-9; Salzmann 11. W. Hoepfner, E.-L. Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland (Wohnen in der klassischen Polis 1, 2nd edn Munich 1994)*, 99, 103-5, 338 n.255, conclude that all the Olynthos mosaics are to be placed after the beginning of the fourth century, including one from the Old Town often considered to be earlier (*Olynthus* 2, 26; Salzmann 11, 21-2, 104 no.93). Recent discussions about the later history of Olynthos appear to indicate only very limited later occupation of the site; cf. Hoepfner, Schwandner, *ibid.*, 70.

⁷ C.K. Williams II, J. Fisher, *Hesperia* 45, 1976, 109-15, pls.13, 14; Williams, *Hesperia* 46, 1977, 45-51, pl.19.

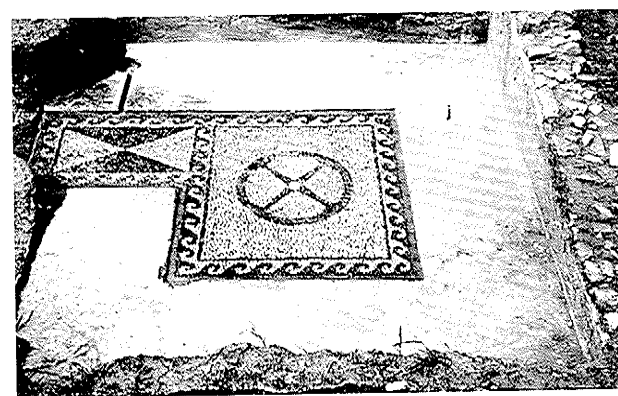


1 Corinth, Centaur Bath, general view. Original size 4.60 m × 4.60 m. End of the fifth century BC.



2 Corinth, Centaur Bath, detail of centaur (north-east corner).

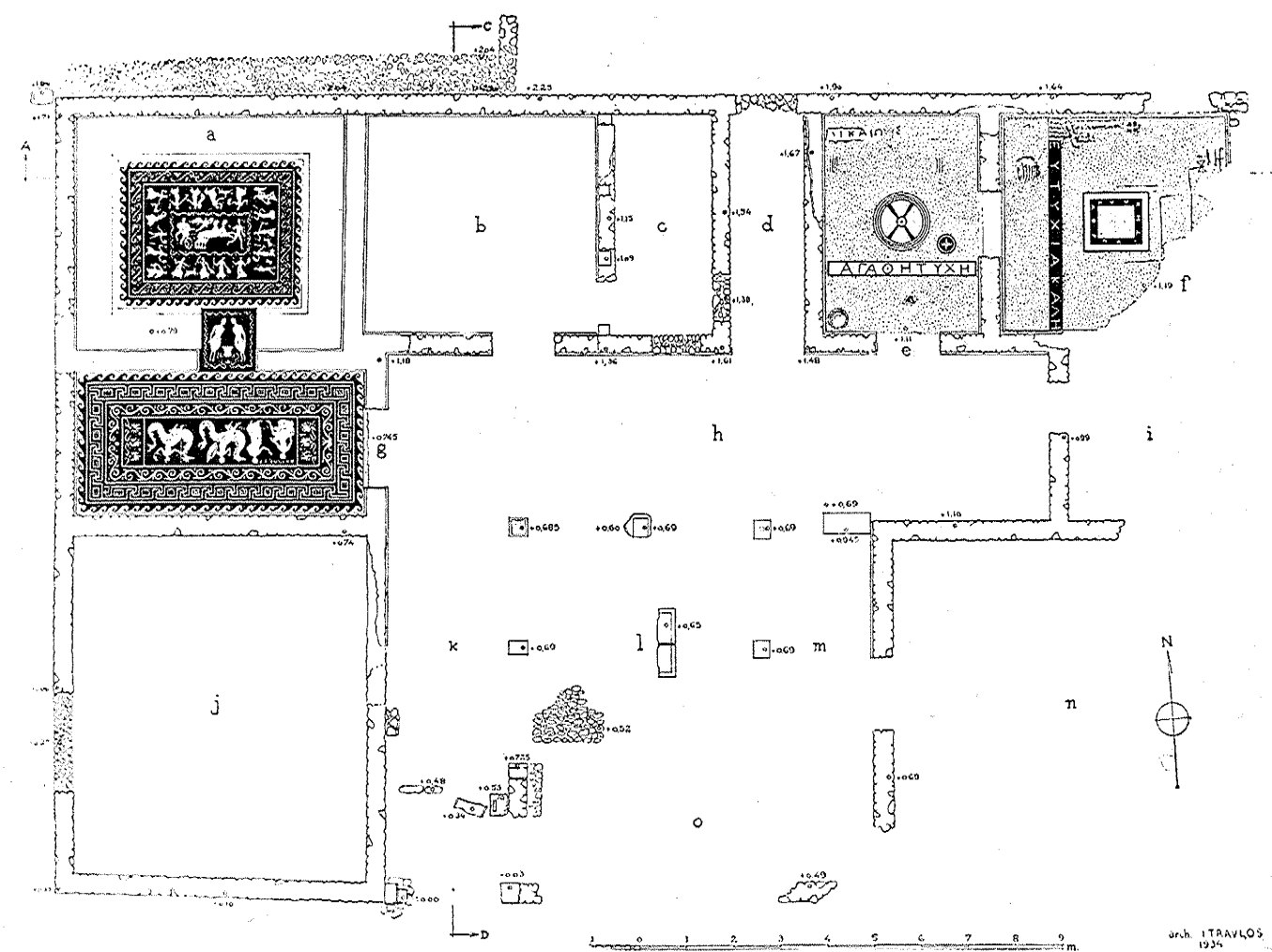
black and white; around it are circular borders of triangles, a meander, and a waveband. In the angles between this circular design and the outer square are figures, shown in white silhouette against a plain black ground: two survive, a centaur chasing a spotted feline, and an ithyphallic donkey. Within the figures black lines are used to show overlapping limbs and the main features of the centaur; there is no attempt to render musculature. A few red and tan pebbles are scattered at random on the black ground, but colour is not used for deliberate effect. Although the treatment of the figures is simple, the floor is well designed and the geometric motifs competently handled except for an error in laying out the waveband. This is not an art in its infancy, even if we cannot trace it back any earlier.



3 Olynthos, House of the Comedian, *andron* mosaic. 1.85 m × 1.60 m; entrance panel 1.00 m × 0.95 m. First half of the fourth century BC.

Following this initial stage, a group may be distinguished which belongs to the late Classical period, from the early fourth century down to c.340 BC. It is best represented by most of the mosaics from Olynthos, by several pavements from Corinth and Sikyon, and by the House of the Mosaics at Eretria. The pavements of this period are composed of smooth natural pebbles; the average sizes vary from as little as one centimetre in diameter in some floors to five centimetres or more in others; most are between one and two centimetres. They are set in a layer of fine mortar on top of a coarser layer, which in turn rests on a foundation of larger stones, much as in the later tessellated mosaics. The designs are normally laid in white against a dark ground, though examples of dark-on-light are found occasionally. Some floors are strictly bichrome, others use pebbles of additional colours, yellow, red, and green, for details, or scatter them at random among the stones of the background.

The mosaics of this period are found almost exclusively in private houses, in contrast to the plain pebble floors of the Archaic period, which were found in temples. Their use here testifies to the increasing demand of the wealthier citizens for elegance and comfort in their domestic surroundings. They were evidently a luxury; even at Olynthos, the site where the greatest single number has been found, they are confined to a small percentage of houses. Their use within the house is also limited. A few occur in courtyards and corridors, where their practical, water-resistant and hard-wearing qualities were evidently valued. Most often, however, they are found in dining-rooms (*andrones*) (figure 3). A decorated portion in the centre of the room is usually surrounded by a plain raised band for the dining couches, and often accompanied by a separate panel at the threshold, and sometimes by a similarly decorated anteroom. These constitute the reception area of the house, where the master entertained his friends at dinner and the symposium;



4 Olynthos, Villa of Good Fortune, plan. First half of the fourth century BC.

decoration is concentrated where it will impress the visitors.⁸

On some of these pavements, the choice of motifs does not appear to be governed primarily by ornamental considerations. On one floor at Olynthos (A XI 9), in a courtyard, motifs are scattered at random, with even less organisation than those of the Gordion floor several centuries earlier.⁹ Prominent among them are swastikas, concentric circles and circles divided into four quadrants forming a wheel-pattern, and a double axe. Circles or wheel-patterns occur on several other floors at Olynthos,

sometimes as part of a very irregular design;¹⁰ they are found also in the Centaur Bath at Corinth, and on later pebble mosaics in Athens, Megara, and Eretria.¹¹ In the Villa of Good Fortune, one of the grandest houses at Olynthos, two small rooms decorated with motifs of this sort give an indication of their probable significance (figure 4). In the first, a large and a small wheel are placed immediately above an inscription reading *Agathe Tyche*, 'Good fortune'. Other motifs are scattered at random around this and the adjoining room, which has inscriptions reading *Eutychia kale*, 'Success is fair', and (around a

⁸ Cf. K. Dunbabin, 'Triclinium and stibadium', in W.J. Slater ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991), 121–2. Practical considerations also encouraged the use of mosaics in dining-rooms, since they allowed the floor to be flushed down with water to remove the debris of the meal.

⁹ D.M. Robinson, *AJA* 38, 1934, 510, pl. xxxi; *Olynthus* 8, 127; Salzmann 21, 100 no. 83. The absence of organised design is not a sign of early date; the house, which is one of the few that apparently continued in use after 348, may owe its present form to late rebuilding (Hoepfner,

Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt* (cit. n. 6), 103–5).

¹⁰ *Olynthus* 12, 254–7, pls. 203, 221; *Olynthus* 2, 26, fig. 99; *Olynthus* 5, 9, 11–13, pls. vii, 14b, 16b; Salzmann 98–104 nos. 81, 85, 91, 93.

¹¹ Athens: H. Thompson, R. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora* 14, *The Agora of Athens* (Princeton 1972), 180–2, pl. 89; Salzmann 88 no. 25. Megara: Salzmann 96 no. 70, with refs. Eretria, gymnasium, among other good luck symbols: K. Schefold, *AntK* 9, 1966, 114–15; Salzmann 92–3 no. 44.

central square) *Aphrodite kale*, 'Aphrodite is fair'; among the motifs are a double axe, a swastika, and at the entrance a large 'A'. Although the function of the rooms is not clear (suggestions have ranged from a gaming-den or brothel to – more probably – a shrine of Aphrodite), the inscriptions suggest that the motifs serve as lucky or apotropaic symbols, reinforcing the allusions to Good Fortune; and the wheel/circle is probably the Wheel of Fortune.¹² It may therefore be suggested that one function of the floor-decoration was the attraction of good luck, and the exclusion of hostile influences from the house or some portion of it; where ordered design is entirely lacking, this role may be taken to be dominant.

Most of the mosaics in this late Classical group are much more decorative than these. They are usually designed with a series of borders or friezes around a central element; many compositions are based on a circle-in-square design. Border-patterns include the maeander, wave-band, scroll, palmette frieze, and rows of triangles. Figures sometimes form a frieze, most often with rows of animals, real or fabulous; others may be placed in rectangular panels, or in the angles between a circle and an enclosing square. Some of the finest examples of this group come from the House of the Mosaics at Eretria, which has a *terminus post quem* of the early fourth century¹³ (figures 6, 7; plate 1). An *andron* is decorated with a central circle with a star surrounded by a lotus-and-palmette frieze, with eagles and ox-skulls filling the angles of the enclosing square. Then comes a figured frieze with Arimaspians fighting griffins on two sides, lions attacking horses on the other two; and an outer border of maeander. A panel at the entrance shows a Nereid riding a sea-horse; in the anteroom are sphinxes and felines in a border of lotus-and-palmette. In this group of mosaics animal scenes and friezes are common; mythological scenes are comparatively rare, and usually occupy central panels. In the *andron* of House A vi 3 at Olynthos Bellerophon is neatly placed in a circle, mounted on Pegasus and striking at the Chimaira beneath; numerous concentric borders surround the

circle, while a separate threshold panel shows griffins with their prey.¹⁴ The most elaborate design of the group is found in the *andron* complex of the Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos (figures 4, 5). In the anteroom Thetis leads a procession of Nereids mounted on sea-monsters to bring new arms to Achilles; they are placed in a long rectangular panel, surrounded by a series of borders. A small panel with two Pans confronted across a *crater* occupies the threshold. In the *andron* itself further borders surround a large central panel, which combines a figured frieze, of maenads and satyrs, with a central panel showing Dionysus driving his leopard-chariot.¹⁵

The figures on the mosaics of this group are essentially two-dimensional, light against a dark ground. Dark figures on light occur once, on a fragmentary mosaic from Sikyon, but seem to be used there simply as a variation.¹⁶ Interior details are indicated by lines of dark pebbles. A development may be traced from a minimum of interior detail on the figures of the earliest mosaics of the group to a fuller rendering on those presumably to be placed later in the fourth century: thus the Bellerophon mosaic at Olynthos belongs to a slightly earlier phase in the development than those in the Villa of Good Fortune. There are, however, few precise dates to support this relative chronology, and the evolution was not necessarily uniform in different regions. Additional colours are used tentatively at first, then with increasing confidence, to highlight specific parts of a figure or to pick out objects and details. A griffin on a threshold at Sikyon has uniform red patches on its wing and body, and a red tongue (figure 8);¹⁷ the Nereid from the House of the Mosaics at Eretria rides a sea-horse with red fins, wears yellow shoes and a red-bordered cloak, and carries a yellow shield rimmed in red (plate 1). Figures, human and animal, are in rigorous profile in the earliest examples, and faces continue to be in profile throughout this period; but later examples show freer movement of the rest of the body. The Maenads in the Villa of Good Fortune, for example, twist and turn in a variety of poses, though the lines that indicate their swirling drapery are coarse and simplified; the



5 Olynthos, Villa of Good Fortune, Dionysiac mosaic from *andron*. 3.90 m × 3.20 m.

Arimaspians at Eretria, brought to their knees by the attacking griffins, move freely in complex positions. Overlapping of figures or parts of figures is avoided at first, then it too comes to be rendered more confidently. In the Villa of Good Fortune, Dionysus' pair of panthers overlap, and the paws of one are seen against the running satyr, while the Nereids in the anteroom sit somewhat precariously on the coils of the sea-monsters. A second mosaic of Nereids from Olynthos, presumably slightly later, places the Nereids much more freely and firmly on the sea-monsters' backs, and coils the creatures' tails into spirals.¹⁸ In none of this group is there any use of modelling or shading;¹⁹ nor do the figures have any indication of spatial setting.

Floral and vegetal elements – rosettes, palmettes, acanthus and ivy scrolls – occupy a prominent place on many of the mosaics. A development may be seen here more clearly than with the figures. Early examples are stylised

and two-dimensional; and conventional designs such as the palmette continue to be treated in this way. The scrolls, however, acquire a greater richness, and begin to be treated in a more three-dimensional manner. An especially fine example from Sikyon covers the whole floor with a design of interlaced scrolls around a central rosette, symmetrical and artificial in overall composition, but increasingly realistic in individual details (figure 8). The leaves curling back from the stems and the great trumpet-flowers in which the scrolls end are now rendered three-dimensionally, and red is used to enhance the effect. The mosaic looks forward to the magnificent floral designs that are characteristic of the early Hellenistic period.²⁰

These early pebble mosaics have often been compared to textiles; but in fact the mosaicists clearly drew their inspiration from many sources. The designs of the floors with their multiple borders, usually slightly set in from the edges of the room, are indeed reminiscent of a carpet,

same mosaic, volume is occasionally suggested by the lines in which the pebbles are set.

²⁰ Orlandos, *Praktika* 1941–4, 59, fig. 3; Salzmann 18, 112 no. 118, suggesting a date c. 360–50; cf. below, n. 32.

¹² Robinson, 'The Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos', *AJA* 38, 1934, 501–6, figs. 1–2; Robinson, *CP* 41, 1946, 208–10 (gambling-parlour); Salzmann 103 nos. 89–90; Hoepfner, Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt* (cit. n. 6), 93 (suggesting that the rooms had a cult function and the building as a whole was a club-house).

¹³ P. Ducrey, I. Metzger, K. Reber, *Eretria 8, Le quartier de la Maison aux Mosaïques* (Lausanne 1993), esp. 85–96. They propose a date around 360 (against Salzmann 27, 90–1 nos. 36–8, who proposed c. 350–40).

¹⁴ *Olynthos* 5, 4–6, pls. 1, 12; Salzmann 23, 99 no. 78.

¹⁵ Robinson, *AJA* 38, 1934, 506–10, pls. xxviii–xxx; *Olynthos* 8, 55–63, pls. 16, 84; *Olynthos* 12, 341–68, pls. 1–111; Salzmann 24–5, 102 nos. 87–8. Salzmann dates the mosaics c. 370–60 BC, on the basis, among other criteria, of the character of the scroll border on the mosaic of Achilles and Thetis.

¹⁶ D. Salzmann, *AA* 1979, 290–306; Salzmann 25–6, 111 no. 116.

¹⁷ From the threshold of the room with the scroll, discussed below, n. 20; Salzmann 26, 112 no. 118.

¹⁸ *Olynthos* 2, 80–8, figs. 203, 205; *Olynthos* 5, 2–3, pls. 11, 11; Salzmann 25, 98 no. 77.

¹⁹ The shield carried by the Nereid in the House of the Mosaics at Eretria gives a slight hint of shading through the admixture of red and yellow pebbles, but it is done in a very unsystematic way; in the



6 Eretria, House of the Mosaics, anteroom and *andron*. Mid-fourth century BC.

with the threshold panel acting as a rug at the door; and they share with textiles their essentially two-dimensional character as a decoration of a flat surface. Some of the common ornamental motifs are among those found in textile decoration or suitable for weaving; and it has been argued that the (apparently) sudden appearance of such floors should be seen as a translation into permanent forms of the luxurious textiles from the Near East fashionable in the later fifth century.²¹ But many motifs, such as the maeander, wave-band, and palmette frieze, form part of the standard repertory shared by architecture, vase-painting, and other crafts. Other parallels have been drawn with red-figure vase-painting, with which the mosaics share the representation of light figures on a dark ground, as well as the iconography of some figured scenes. But it seems unlikely that a small-scale art such as vase-painting would have acted as a primary inspiration for work in a very different medium; and the two do not

in fact have much in common. The rendering of the figures on the earlier pavements is infinitely less sophisticated than on contemporary vase-painting, and seems to revert to a level of anatomical knowledge typical in that medium of a century or more earlier. The evolution within the handling of the figures which has just been discussed is an internal evolution, as the mosaicists grew more confident in the handling of their material; it does not run parallel to any similar evolution in vase-painting, but rather aims to catch up with achievements mastered there much earlier. Only in the treatment of vegetal ornament is there a comparable development in mosaic and vase-painting, which does suggest a relationship, though perhaps in the sense that both drew on a common source.²²

The influence of major painting is hardly to be discerned in these early mosaics. Written sources suggest that painters in the late fifth and fourth centuries were pre-occupied with questions of naturalism, the representation of space and handling of the third dimension, and the use of shading to model form in figures and objects. These concerns are foreign to the mosaics of the late Classical period, though a few tentative steps in this direction are to be seen on some of the finest examples, those from the House of the Mosaics at Eretria or the Sikyon scroll. Only at the end of the fourth century is an attempt to imitate or rival the achievements of painting perceptible in the mosaics, and then in a very specific group.

This next group belongs to the early Hellenistic period, approximately the last third of the fourth century BC. Its outstanding products are the mosaics from two large houses in the Macedonian capital of Pella, dated on archaeological grounds to the closing decades of the century.²³ House 1.1 contained figured mosaics of a Lion Hunt and of Dionysus (figures 9, 10), both occupying the centre of large *andrones*, while threshold panels represented a griffin with its prey and a pair of centaurs. Coarser geometric designs of lozenges and squares paved the anterooms to the *andrones*.²⁴ In House 1.5 there were

²¹ F. von Lorenz, 'Barbaron hyphasmata', *RömMitt* 52, 1937, 165–222; Ph. Bruneau, *Archeologia* (Warszawa) 27, 1976, 20.

²² Cf. M. Robertson, 'Early Greek mosaic', in *Studies in the History of Art 10, Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times* (Washington 1982), 244–6, for a comparison of the floral designs on the mosaics to the 'flower-paintings' ascribed by Pliny, *H.N.* 21.4; 35.125, to Pausias of Sikyon in the mid-fourth century; Salzmann 14–20 for parallels between vegetal ornament in vase-painting and other media and that on mosaics.

²³ Makaronas, Giouri 124–45, 168 (for the date), Stratigraphic excava-

tions under the mosaics in both houses revealed an identical system of bedding, and ceramic and numismatic material which gave a *terminus post quem* of 350–25 for both: I. Touratsoglou, *ArchDelt* 30, 1975, A, 165–84. The variations in style and technical means between the mosaics in the two houses should not be ascribed to a difference in date, but to one of workmanship, and perhaps also of models being imitated. Touratsoglou suggests a date early in the reign of Cassander as the most likely.

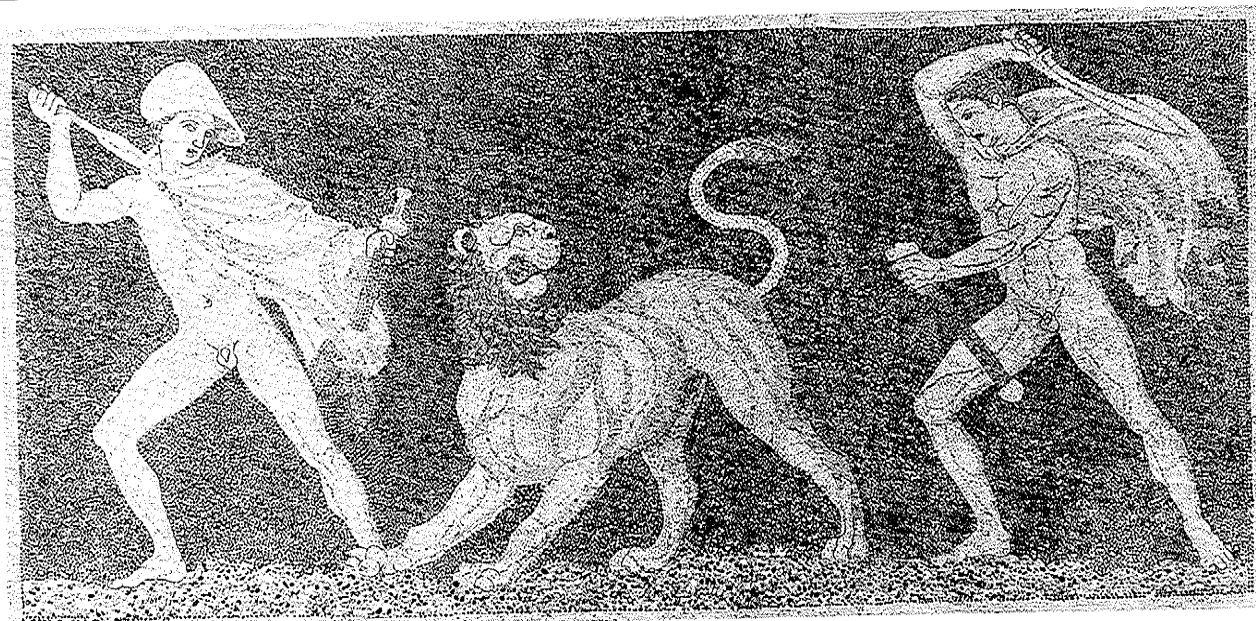
²⁴ Makaronas, Giouri 133–40; Ph. Petsas, 'Mosaics from Pella', *CMGR* 1, 41–56, figs. 1–5; Salzmann 28–30, 104–6, nos. 94–9.



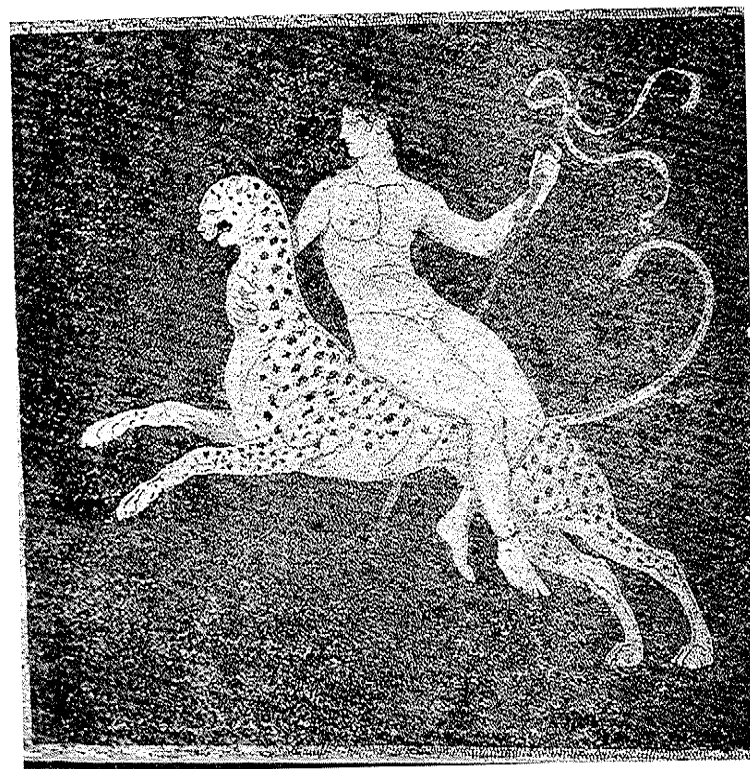
7 Eretria, House of the Mosaics, griffins and Arimasps from *andron*. 2.60 m × 2.60 m.



8 Sikyon, floral mosaic. Sikyon Museum. 2.86 m × 2.76 m; entrance panel 1.13 m × 0.84 m. Mid-fourth century BC.



9 Pella, House 1.1, Lion Hunt. Pella Museum. 4.90 m × 3.20 m. Late fourth century BC.



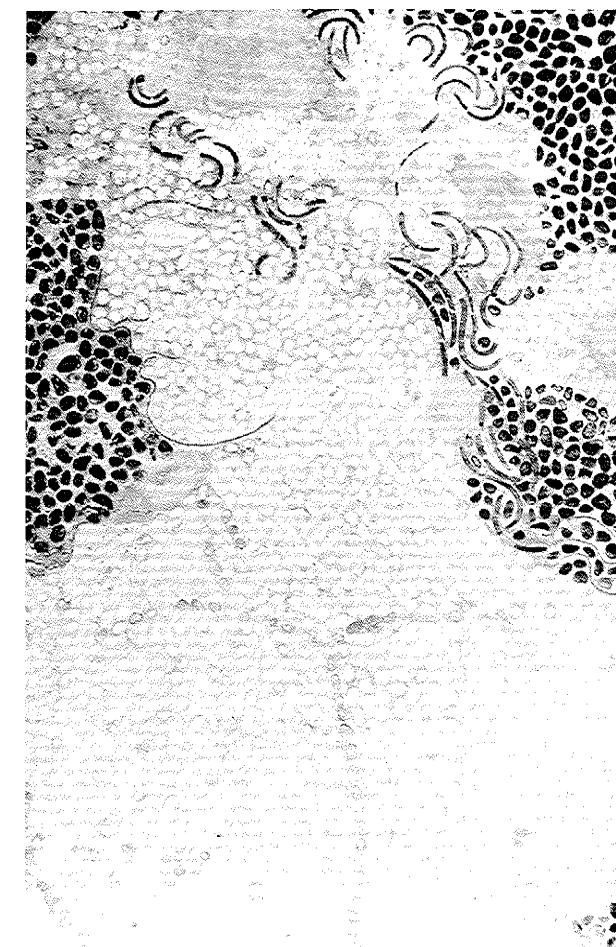
10 Pella, House 1.1, Dionysus on leopard. Pella Museum. 2.72 m × 2.69 m. Late fourth century BC.

three figured mosaics, showing respectively the Rape of Helen by Theseus, a Stag Hunt (figure 12), and an Amazonomachy, as well as fragments of two other floral designs.²⁵ All differ in a striking manner from even the most advanced stylistically of the previous group; new techniques are adopted, and there are signs of a new conception of the nature of the medium. Figured friezes have almost totally disappeared; most of the floors still use the design of multiple borders around a central rectangular panel, but this panel has become much more important. The largest, the Rape of Helen, measures 8.48 m by 2.84 m, the Lion Hunt 4.90 m by 3.20 m. The figure scenes in these panels are composed with a concern for movement and the third dimension quite different from any of the mosaics previously discussed. The figures stand on shallow uneven strips of yellow-brown ground; and they are represented with free use of foreshortening. In the Lion Hunt, overlapping is kept to a minimum; but in the Stag Hunt the two hunters, hound, and stag form a densely set group, with a real sense of depth. Even more ambitious is the composition in the Rape of Helen: the charioteer Phorbas drives a four-horse chariot, whose overlapping horses advance in three-quarter view, and looks back at the intertwined figures of Theseus and Helen, while at the end of the panel Helen's companion Deianeira turns as she flees and holds out a hand towards her friend. The poses are complex and convincing; faces are in three-quarter view as well as profile.

Other changes are to be seen in the treatment of the figures. Details are no longer purely linear; shading is used extensively, with clusters of grey and brown pebbles

indicating the musculature of the human body, the folds of the cloaks, the pelts of the animals. Colour is used more freely; though the figures are still light on a dark ground, the stag's pelt is brownish, human hair and animal manes are rendered in red and yellow, several shades of red, brown, and yellow pick out details such as the harness of the horses, the belt and scabbard of a sword, and the tongue of stag and hound. Features are carefully delineated: eyebrows, eyelashes, the curl of a nostril. To achieve these effects, new techniques in the setting of the stones are employed. The pebbles are much more carefully sorted, not only for colour but also for size, with the pebbles in the figures more densely set than in the background. In addition, several of the floors use various artificial means to improve the rendering. In the Lion Hunt, large areas of the outlines of the figures and many interior details are marked off by strips of terracotta, for instance the eyes and nose of the hunters, the outlines of their faces, fingers, toes, and genitals; the curls of human hair and of the lion's mane are individually outlined (plates 2, 3). Traces in the mortar show that these strips must have been set in place first, and the outlines then filled up with pebbles; red lines from a preliminary sketch on the mortar were also visible in places.²⁶ The Rape of Helen also uses terracotta strips for details, but adds thin strips of lead for specific places such as the eye sockets and fingernails. The eyes of all the figures are missing, and are likely to have been of semi-precious stones. In the Stag Hunt, in contrast, no use is made of such strips; but there is a similar striving for sharp definition and clear detail. This is achieved through the use of much smaller pebbles where fine detail is required; the eyebrows, eyelashes, and fingernails of the hunters, for example, and the eyes of stag and dog are all outlined by a single row of small black pebbles.

The mosaic of Dionysus in House 1.1 differs from the rest in its renunciation of three-dimensional effects and in its much simpler composition. The *andron* had the usual raised platform for the couches around the edge. The central area was paved with plain white pebbles, instead of the usual borders around the panel. Here Dionysus, holding a thyrsus, rides on the back of his leopard (or is it a cheetah?), against a completely plain black ground. The heads of god and beast are in profile, though Dionysus' body is in foreshortened three-quarter view, and the effect of the whole is of a classicising simplicity. The technical means, however, do not differ greatly from the Lion Hunt in the same house (figure 11).



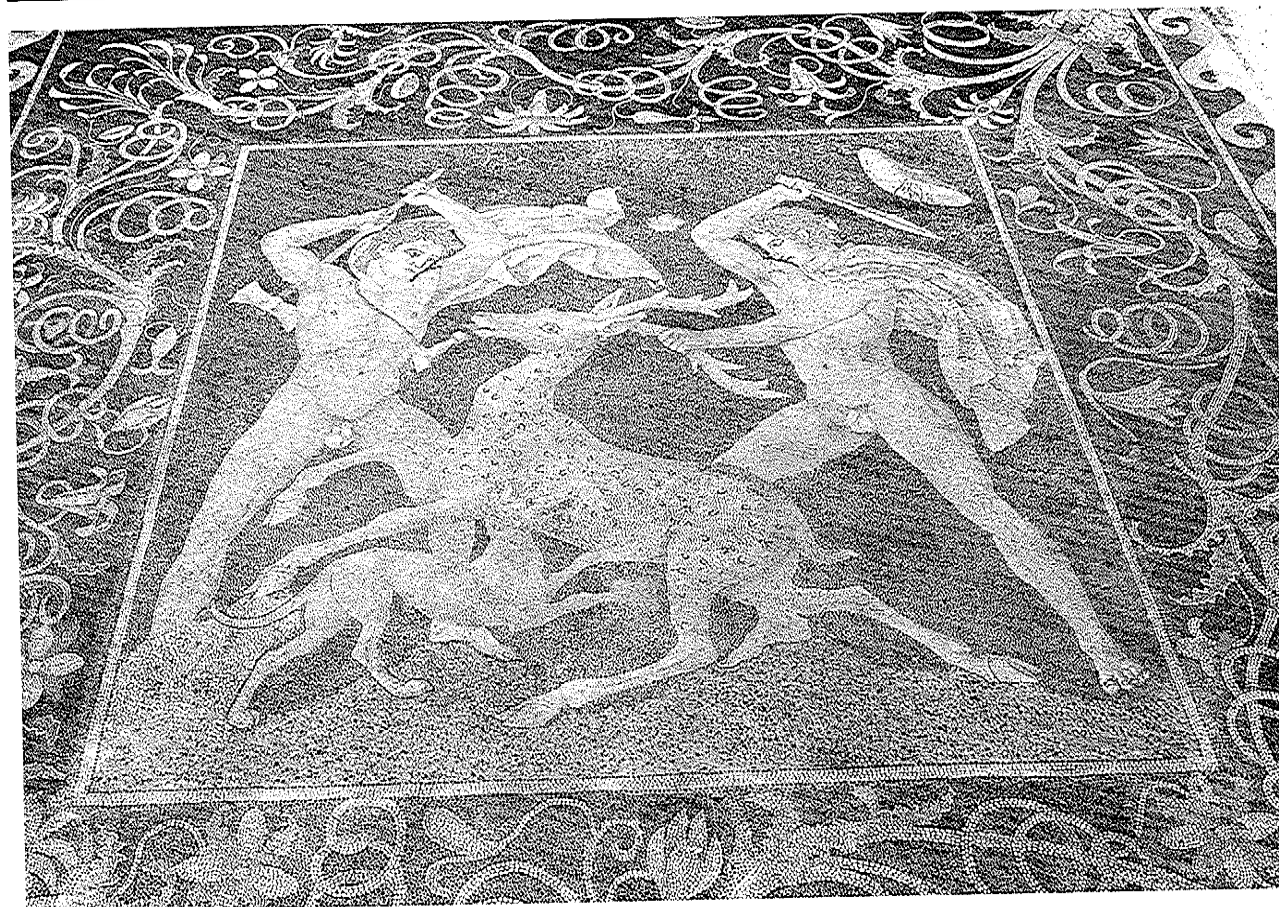
11 Pella, House 1.1, Dionysus, detail of head of Dionysus.

Although the interior detail of the god's body is more linear than on those of the hunters, shadows are indicated on his arm and leg and on the further legs of the leopard. Both lead and terracotta strips are used for outlines and details, especially in the faces of god and beast, and for hands and feet. In addition, artificial beads of green clay were used for Dionysus' wreath of vine-leaves and the head of the thyrsus. His eye, and that of the leopard, were again probably formed by a single semi-precious stone.

There can be little doubt that the enormous difference between the Pella mosaics and their predecessors is due to the influence of an art which up to this time appears to have had little impact on mosaic: major painting. The advances in the handling of depth and the use of shading reflect developments in fourth-century Greek painting, as we see them, for instance, in the Macedonian tombs of Vergina and Lefkadia. Thus the hunting scenes may be compared in several respects with that on the façade of the 'Tomb of Philip' at Vergina, the four-horse chariot on the Rape of Helen with that in the Tomb of Persephone; it

²⁵ Makaronas, *Giouri* 124–32; Petsas, *ibid.*, figs. 7–10; Salzmann 106–8, nos. 100–4.

²⁶ Cf. Petsas, *ibid.*, 44, 53, figs. 12, 13; see below, ch. 17, n. 23.



12 Pella, House 1.5, Stag Hunt signed by Gnosis. Central panel 3.24 m × 3.17 m. Late fourth century BC.

also looks forward (though it is simpler) to that on the Alexander mosaic from Pompeii, whose original is believed to have been a painting of the end of the fourth century.²⁷ The mosaics are no longer conceived as a two-dimensional design spread over the surface of the floor, but as a pictorial figure scene, to which borders are subordinate. Only the Dionysus mosaic lacks this three-dimensional quality, but it differs even more from the mosaics of Olynthos or Corinth in its concentration upon a single, isolated figure group. It seems likely that it too imitates a painting, but in this case the model will have been a classicising work, looking back in composition at least to the art of the fifth century. There is another indication of the new status of the craft of mosaic: along the top of the Stag Hunt mosaic is written *Gnosis epoiesen*, 'Gnosis made this', the first known signature of a mosaicist. The new techniques which are used reveal the mosaicists pushing the art of pebble mosaic to its uttermost limits, in the search for effects finer and more sophisticated than could readily be achieved with natural pebbles. While Gnosis succeeded

²⁷ M. Andronikos, *Vergina. The Royal Tombs* (Athens 1984), 86–119; Alexander mosaic, below, ch.3, ns.13–17. Cf. also Makaronas, Giouri, 164–8.

in achieving remarkable results without the use of artificial materials, the labour involved must have been extremely demanding. The other mosaics, with their use of lead and terracotta strips and of artificial beads, show the pursuit of effects beyond the limitations of the natural medium. The terracotta strips in particular must have been baked to the required shape before use; this implies the existence of full-scale cartoons for the design, in addition to the preliminary sketch visible in places on the mortar.

Floral motifs on the Pella floors show the culmination of the tendency observed on earlier fourth-century mosaics. Around the Stag Hunt mosaic runs a border of extraordinary richness: scrolls spring from acanthus clumps in the angles, and unfurl along the sides in a series of spiralling tendrils ending in a wide variety of flowers and leaves (figure 13). Though the whole is artificial, individual forms are often highly naturalistic; the overall design is three-dimensional, and polychromy is freely used to enhance the effect. Equally rich scrolls once framed the Lion Hunt mosaic, and two fragmentary floors in House 1.5; and elaborate all-over floral designs of the same type cover two further mosaics from Pella, from

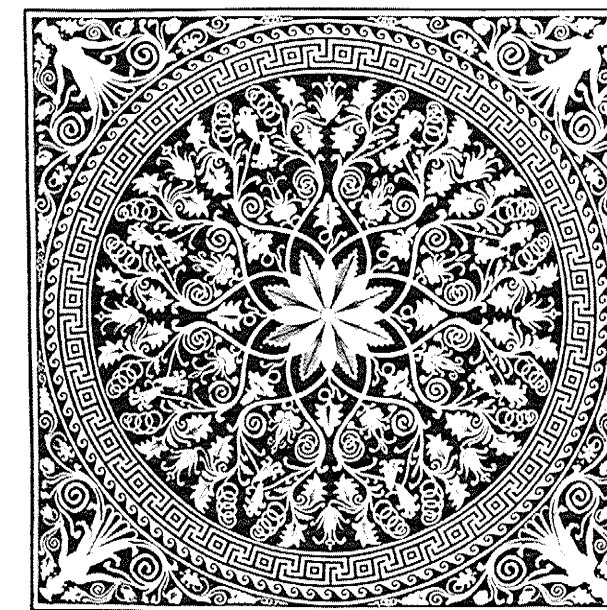


13 Pella, House 1.5, Stag Hunt, detail of border.

a circular building (*tholos*) and an *andron* in the Kanali district.²⁸ They are also found outside Pella, on a fragmentary mosaic at Dyrrhachion (Epidamnus), where they frame a magnificent female head in three-quarter view, about a metre high.²⁹ Perhaps the finest of all decorate a room in the Palace at Vergina (ancient Aigai), filling a circle around a central rosette, while female *protomai* ending in scrolls occupy the outer corners³⁰ (figure 14). The scrolls are more regular and symmetrical here than on the Pella borders, in part because of their use as an all-over design, but the three-dimensional character of spiral tendrils and individual flower forms is as strong. The design has been compared to the shoulder-decoration

²⁸ *Tholos*, late fourth century: Ch. Makaronas, *ArchDelt* 19, 1964, B 3, 340–4, pls.398–9, 404; M. Lilimbaki-Akamati, 'Ανασκαφική έρευνα στην περιοχή του καναλιού Πέλλας', *AEMTH* 1, 1987, 137–45; Salzmann 19, 29, 108 no.105. *Andron*, beginning of the third century: Lilimbaki-Akamati, 'Ένα νέο ψηφιδωτό της Πέλλας', in *Άμνητος. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Καθηγητή Μ. Ανδρόνικο* (Thessaloniki 1987) I, 455–69, pls.93–4.

²⁹ A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'La mosaïque hellénistique de Dyrrhachion et sa place dans la série des mosaïques grecques à décor végétal', in *L'Illirie méridionale et l'Épire dans l'antiquité II* (Colloque Clermont-



14 Vergina, Palace, room 13, drawing of floral mosaic. 6.70 m × 6.70 m. End of the fourth century BC.

found on South Italian vases of the late fourth century, which shows the same sense of depth and luxuriant growth, and often frames a female *protome* like that on the Dyrrhachion mosaic. Floral ornament of this type occurs in other media of the same period, notably metalware, and at least once in major painting, in a Macedonian tomb.³¹ All attest to a common repertory, and a shared interest in vegetal ornament, rather than direct influence from one medium to another. The Macedonian mosaics appear in this respect too to show a local development, perhaps the result of the activity of a single workshop, operating also in Dyrrhachion presumably for a special contract. It is an attractive hypothesis that its origins are to be connected with the artists who, two generations earlier, produced the floral mosaic at Sikyon discussed above.³²

The high pictorial quality of the Pella mosaics is unique; no later pebble mosaics even begin to approach it. The reason is surely in part economic, in view of the amount of labour which they must have required; no others have been found in any context comparable to the palatial dwellings of the Macedonian capital. On our

Ferrand 1990 (Paris 1993)), 135–41; Salzmann 19, 90 no.33.

³⁰ M. Andronikos, Ch. Makaronas, N. Mpoutsopoulos, G. Balakakis, *Τὸ ἀνάκτορο τῆς Βεργίνης* (Athens 1961), 20–2, pls.x.2, xvi–xvii; M. Andronikos, *Vergina. The Prehistoric Necropolis and the Hellenistic Palace* (SIMA 13, Lund 1964), 7, fig.14; Salzmann 19, 30, 114 no.130.

³¹ Refs. in Guimier-Sorbets, 'La mosaïque hellénistique' (cit.n.29); cf. also Salzmann 14–20.

³² Above, n.20, and n.22 for Robertson's theory of the association of these floral mosaics with the flower-paintings of Pausias of Sikyon.



15 Rhodes, Bellerophon and Chimaira. Rhodes Museum. Probably first half of third century BC.

present knowledge, therefore, they should be seen as an exception, and not used as an index of the prevailing style of the period. The aim to imitate painting which they display was also to be characteristic of later Hellenistic mosaics, which used different techniques and materials; but it was extraordinarily difficult and laborious for mosaicists working with natural pebbles.

Pebble mosaics elsewhere in Greece which can be assigned to the third century show a predominantly two-dimensional and linear style, more in keeping with the limitations of the medium. Several fine examples have been found in the city of Rhodes.³³ They show large panels, in which the figures are set in white against a plain black ground: Bellerophon and the Chimaira (figure 15), a centaur holding a hare, a Triton. There is no indication of setting, though the figures themselves, especially the frontal Triton, use foreshortening and convey a sense of depth, and the anatomical rendering is considerably more detailed than on works of the pre-Hellenistic period.

³³ G. Konstantinopoulos, *ArchDelt* 22, 1967, B 2, 526, pl.384; Konstantinopoulos, *AAA* 6, 1973, 119, 124, fig.9; Konstantinopoulos, *Ergon* 1976, 166–71, figs.144–7; Salzmänn 32, 110–11 nos.112–15. The mosaics have only a *terminus post quem* in the foundation of the city in 408/7 BC; on the basis of stylistic criteria Salzmänn ascribes them to the first third of the third century.

They are mostly plain black and white with a limited use of grey, sometimes to suggest shading. Lead strips are used in the Bellerophon and centaur mosaics to outline a few details (for instance, the shaft of Bellerophon's spear), but in a much less systematic way than at Pella. Floral scrolls form a border around the Bellerophon and Triton mosaics; they too are simpler and flatter than those at Pella and Vergina, but retain a suggestion of the third dimension. Both the stylistic aims of the Pella mosaicists and the technical means by which they achieved them were therefore known to those at Rhodes; but they were content – probably through a mixture of aesthetic and economic reasons – with much simpler effects.

The later history of pebble mosaics represents a decline in quality. They continued to be produced throughout the third century BC and into the second; there was some enlargement of the decorative repertory, but the standard of execution was seldom high. More interesting is their geographical expansion in the Hellenistic period. In the fourth century they are found almost exclusively in mainland Greece; early Hellenistic mosaics appear in the islands and Asia Minor, and the absence of earlier examples here may be due to the accidents of excavation. But examples dated, certainly or probably, to the third and second centuries are found much further afield: on the

northern shores of the Black Sea, at Olbia and Chersonnesos; on Cyprus, at Kourion and Nea Paphos; and as far east as the palace of Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan.³⁴ Others are found in the west, though it is difficult here to disentangle local traditions from Greek influences. That such independent traditions existed is shown by the discovery of pebble mosaics with simple patterns in Spain dating from the seventh to the fourth centuries BC.³⁵ In Italy too there is evidence for a local tradition of floors where monochrome pebbles were laid in patterns formed by the angle of their setting. But other pebble mosaics in Italy show more Greek influence in composition and choice of motifs, though distinct local characteristics remain. One example in Sicily, at the Carthaginian city of Motya, has often been dated very early, since the city was destroyed in 398/7 BC; however more recent research suggests that it belongs to a reoccupation of the site.³⁶ A group from Arpi in Apulia show animal friezes in black on a light ground, within borders of meander and wave; the technique is crude, and they seem to represent a local variant.³⁷

³⁴ Black Sea: A. Vostchinina, 'Mosaïques gréco-romaines trouvées en Union Soviétique', *CMGR* 1, 315–19, figs.1–2, 5; Salzmänn 35–6, 89 no.29, 97–8 nos.73–4; archaeological evidence points to a date in the third century BC for the mosaics from Olbia, the third to second for the one from Chersonnesos. Cyprus: Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics*, 4, 10–11 nos.1–2, pl.1; Salzmänn 37–8, 126 nos.2–3; the Nea Paphos mosaic is dated stratigraphically to the end of the fourth/beginning of the third century. Ai Khanoum: P. Bernard, *CRAI* 1975, 175–80; Bernard, *CRAI* 1976, 291–2; Salzmänn 40, 82 nos.2–4; first half to mid-second century BC.

In general, after the early third century pebble mosaics represent the survival of a technique which had already passed its prime. Other experiments were underway with different methods of paving a floor, many of which indicate dissatisfaction with the limitations of natural pebbles: a dissatisfaction towards which the mosaics of Pella had already pointed.

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Salzmänn (who gives a catalogue of all pebble mosaics published up to c.1980); C.M. Robertson, 'Greek mosaics', *JHS* 85, 1965, 72–89, pls.18–22, and 'Postscript', *JHS* 87, 1967, 133–6, pls.23–4; Robertson, 'Early Greek mosaic', in *Studies in the History of Art 10, Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times* (Washington 1982), 241–9; A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, in R. Ginouvès ed., *Macedonia, from Philip II to the Roman Conquest* (Princeton 1994), 117–36.

³⁵ D. Fernández-Galiano, 'New light on the origins of floor mosaics', *AntJ* 62, 1982, 235–44; Cástulo (Jaén) and Pozo Moro (Albacete).

³⁶ Boesclager 15–20, figs.1–5; Salzmänn 39, 97 no.72; Boesclager rightly says that the provincial character of the floor makes any assignation of a chronology on stylistic grounds impossible.

³⁷ M. Cristofani, *DdA* 1, 1967, 206, figs.36–7; Salzmänn 39, 84 nos.12–14. The use of dark-on-light figures does not seem to me, as Salzmänn takes it, to be a characteristic of the third century, but rather to be a local peculiarity here.

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The invention of tessellated mosaics: Hellenistic mosaics in the east

I

Our rather scanty evidence for the third century BC shows it to have been a period of experiment with several different mosaic techniques. There can be little doubt that at some point in the course of the third century mosaicists began to use regular squared tesserae of cut stone; but attempts to attribute the invention of tesserae to one specific time or place have not been convincing. It is probably mistaken to look for an orderly transition from one technique to another, and to try to fit surviving examples into a single coherent scheme of development. In my opinion there was no direct and uniform passage from pebble mosaics to tessellated, with intermediate techniques transitional between them. Rather various experimental techniques seem to have been in use simultaneously, drawing on several different traditions and various technical means, some of which had been in use earlier for pavements of very different character. The mosaics which are certainly or probably to be attributed to this century are heterogeneous both in technique and in style, and give no clear picture of a uniform overall development; there is a shortage of fixed dates, and controversies over the chronology of individual works are correspondingly frequent. Still less can a single 'invention' of the tessera be pinpointed; its advantages for greater precision and clearer representation appear to have made themselves known gradually to craftsmen in different regions.¹

As we have seen, pebble mosaics continued to be produced in this period. Other materials were also used, both

in combinations with pebbles and as alternatives to them. The impetus for their use was probably in part practical: pebbles of suitable size and colour were not always readily available. But it was also certainly aesthetic: once the desire had arisen for more pictorial effects, for greater clarity of detail and more elaborate design, other materials proved more suitable to achieve these ends.

A small group of pebble mosaics shows the introduction, alongside the pebbles, of a few pieces of stone artificially cut to shape. The best known (though now largely destroyed) is the mosaic from the *pronaos* of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, probably laid in or after the mid-third century.² This contained originally two panels, with a male and a female Triton, surrounded by borders of lotus-and-palmette and of meander, and a smaller panel with fish; only parts of the male Triton and the borders now remain. The greater part of the mosaic is of pebbles, but thin splinters of red and yellow stone are used for the hair and beard of the Triton, while his eye is composed of cut pieces of white stone closely fitted around a black stone at the centre. The use of cut pieces is here very limited, mostly to provide colours not available in the natural pebbles; only in one part, the eye, are they used to obtain precision of form. This use is carried much further on a mosaic from the Asklepieion at Lebena in Crete, for which archaeological evidence indicates broad *termini* between the fourth and second to first centuries BC³ (figure 16). Here pebbles are used for the background and the wave-band border; but a sea-horse in the central panel and two palmettes at the side are composed principally of pieces of white marble cut to approximately rectangular



16 Lebena, Asklepieion, irregular mosaic. Preserved size 4.20 m × 2.20 m. Probably mid- to late third century BC.

shape. They are not closely fitted together, like regular tesserae, but set roughly adjacent in the mortar in much the same way as the pebbles. The internal markings of the sea-horse are of thin black pebbles, some split lengthwise; and terracotta pieces are used for some details, such as the nostrils and tongue. The cut pieces are here deliberately substituted for pebbles, presumably for the sake of their greater sharpness of outline and more coherent surface.

Other pavements use irregular pieces of stone without any admixture of pebbles. In their crudest form such pieces are simply rough chips of marble or limestone with no attempt at shaping, probably the waste products of a sculptor's workshop. Unpatterned floors composed of such chips were used much earlier, and in no sense derive from pebble mosaics. They are found at Olynthos, and continue in frequent use in the Hellenistic period; at

Delos they form the most common single type of floor.⁴ Chips nearly as unshaped as these are used on some mosaics for designs, and even for figures. One from Pergamon, from a building on the site of the Asklepieion, is dated on good though not absolutely compelling grounds to the mid-third century⁵ (figure 17). A central rosette in a circle flanked by white doves, and a side panel with a *crater* between two griffins, are framed in a border of wave-band. The chips are very irregular, only black and white are used, and there are no internal details in the figures; but lead strips outline the ornamental motifs to give them greater precision. Mosaics from Erythrai and Lykosoura use a similar technique, but without the lead strips; the designs are slightly more elaborate, but the figures are still in rigid silhouette with a minimum of detail.⁶ One from Sparta shows a frontal Triton at the

¹ For the arguments here see K. Dunbabin, 'Technique and materials of Hellenistic mosaics', *AJA* 83, 1979, 265–77; Dunbabin, 'Early pavement types in the west and the invention of tessellation', *CMGR* v (1994), 26–40. A more orderly process of transition is proposed by Salzmann 59–77.

² W. Dörpfeld, P. Graef, in E. Curtius, F. Adler eds., *Olympia* 2 (Berlin 1892), 10, 180–1, pl. 105; Dunbabin, 'Technique and materials' (cit. n. 1), 274–5; Salzmann 63, 117 no. 138, pls. 71.5–6, 72. For the date, see N. Yalouris, 'The mosaic pavement of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia', *AAA* 1, 1968, 78–82: a cut which must have been filled before the mosaic was laid contained three coins, the most relevant a bronze

from Sikyon dated 323–251 BC. This would possibly permit a date in the first half of the third century, but Yalouris, followed by Salzmann, accepts a *terminus post quem* in the middle of that century.

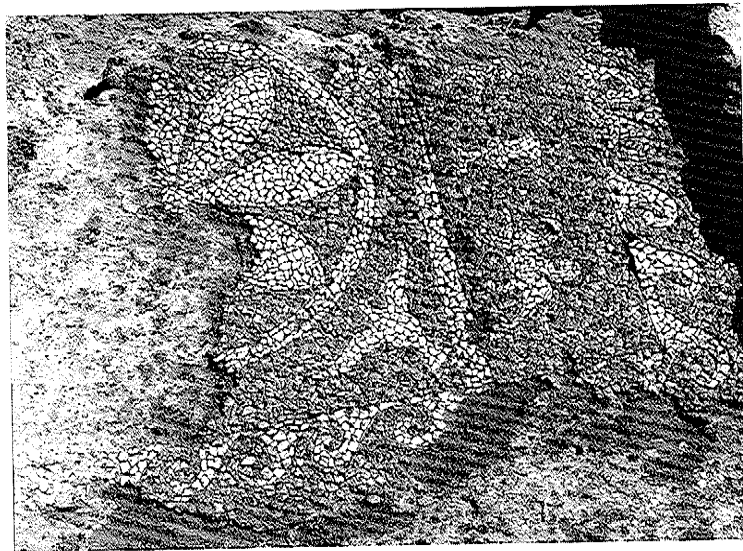
³ F. Berti, 'Il mosaico dell'Asclepieion di Lebena', *Antichità Cretesi. Studi in onore di Doro Levi* 11 (*Cronache di Archeologia* 13, 1974 (Catania 1978)), 213–18, pls. xxviii–xxix; Salzmann 64, 117 no. 137, pls. 76–7. For a discussion of the dating evidence, derived from the history of the site, see Berti, who proposes the last two decades of the third century on historical grounds; Salzmann accepts the middle to second half of the third century.

⁴ Refs. in Dunbabin, 'Technique and materials' (cit. n. 1), 268–9; for Delos, see below, n. 37.

⁵ O. Ziegenaus, G. de Luca, *AvP* 11, *Das Asklepieion*, 1 (Berlin 1968), 28–9, 106, pl. 14b; Dunbabin, *ibid.*, 272; Salzmann 67, 124 no. 166, pl. 83.1.

⁶ Erythrai: W. Jobst, P. Scherrer, *Antike Mosaiken aus Erythrai* (*Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 118, 1981, So. 24), 394–5, figs. 3–4, without archaeolog-

ical context; Salzmann 68, 121 no. 154, pl. 85. Lykosoura, Temple of Despoina: P.W. Lehmann, 'The technique of the mosaic at Lykosoura', in *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann* (New York 1964), 190–7, figs. 1–10, who accepts a date in the mid-second century for the temple. Recent datings hesitate between the third and second century: E. Lévy, J. Marcadé, *BCH* 96, 1972, 1003; Salzmann 65, 123 no. 162, pl. 80.1–2.



17 Pergamon, chip-mosaic. Pergamon Museum. 1.83 m × 1.30 m. Probably mid-third century BC.

centre of two figural friezes, with considerably more detail and movement in the figures; it uses unshaped chips together with more regularly cut stones for details and specially shaped pieces for internal markings.⁷

Both the chip-pavements and those of mixed pebble and cut stone use a range of materials running from completely unshaped stone chips to something approximating to regular tesserae; both also make a limited use of pieces specially cut to a predetermined shape. Chronological problems do not permit their arrangement into a regular evolutionary sequence leading in orderly fashion to the invention of mosaics made of regular squared tesserae. Almost none of the supposedly 'intermediate' examples have firmly established dates; many lack any secure chronology, others have at most only very broad *termini*. Stylistic arguments for dating are also dangerous, in view of the paucity of examples and their wide geographic diffusion. The most that can be said is that there are grounds for assigning some at least of this group of pavements to the third century BC.⁸ In general, both the chip-pavements and those of mixed technique (of the type examined above) are much simpler than the best pebble mosaics of the fourth century. Many are confined to very basic ornamental patterns; the composition of the more elaborate examples consists mainly of concentric friezes around a central panel or motif; the design as a whole is emphatically two-dimensional. Figures are almost always

in profile, with limited internal detail, and very little indication of depth; only the (undated) Triton mosaic at Sparta introduces a greater variety of poses.

These techniques continued in use into the second century and occasionally later, sometimes for practical reasons of economy, sometimes for effect. Many mosaics of the middle and later Hellenistic period, in fact, play deliberately with the contrast between different techniques and textures. Pebbles can be used for specific parts of a scene or figure, as in the mosaic of Hunting Erotes from Alexandria discussed below, or different areas of a floor can be executed in contrasting techniques. The latter practice is very common at Delos, where bands of chips or pebbles frequently surround regular tessellated panels or alternate with borders in other techniques.⁹

Other experiments were under way in Sicily in the third century. The technique of pebble mosaic was never properly established on the island; the only example known is that from Motya. The most common type of pavement in Sicilian houses of the Hellenistic period is made of mortar and aggregate, usually reddish from the admixture of crushed tile, of the type known in Italy as *signina*.¹⁰ The surface is frequently decorated with pieces of stone ranging from irregular chips (much smaller than those used in the eastern chip-pavements) to more-or-less regular squared tesserae; these may be scattered at random over the surface, or set to form simple patterns and motifs. Pavements of this type were in use in Sicily in the third century BC, perhaps earlier, and are likely to have been influenced by the wider variety of pavement types found in Punic Carthage. A good example may be seen in a construction inserted into temple A at Selinus (Selinunte) during the period when that city was under Carthaginian control between the early fourth and the mid-third century; its decoration includes Punic symbols, and a bull's skull in a wreath (figure 18). The technique does not appear to owe anything to the contemporary experiments in the eastern Mediterranean; but by a separate route it too could lead to the development of regular tessellated pavements, as the squared tesserae came to be set to form a continuous surface.¹¹

and materials' (cit.n.1), 267–8.

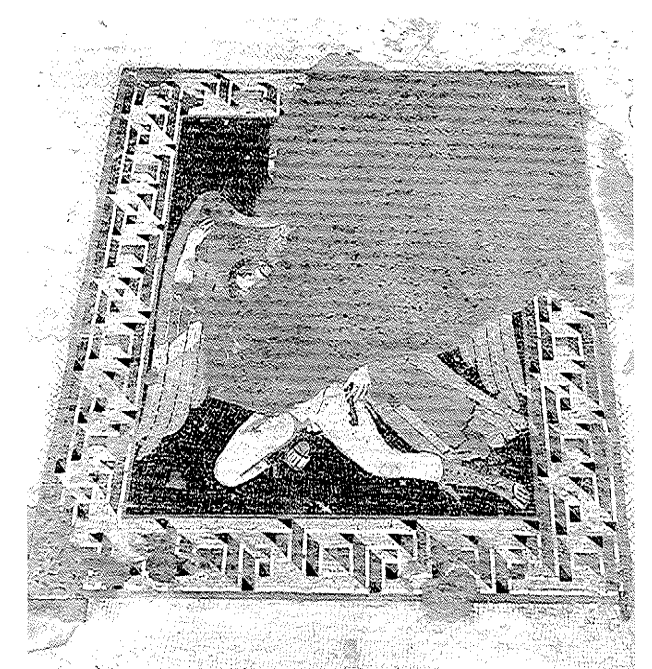
¹⁰ Below, ch.4, n.2. Motya: above, ch.1, n.36.

¹¹ See Dunbabin *CMGR* v, 26–39. Selinus: V. Tusa, 'Segni di Tanit a Selinunte', *Revista de la Universidad Complutense* 25, no.104, 1976 (= *Homenaje a García y Bellido* 2), 29–35, figs.5–8. For the Punic symbol known as the 'sign of Tanit' see below, n.44; ch.7, n.5. For Punic pavements in Carthage, see below, ch.7, ns.5–9.

The largest number of Hellenistic mosaics in Sicily has been found, not at any of the great Greek cities, but at Morgantina, a small town of the interior. Although most belong to a period when the tessellated technique was no longer a novelty, one group, from the House of Ganymede, has been widely accepted as representing a very early stage in the development of that technique.¹² Indeed on the basis of the date advanced for the mosaics by the excavator, c.260–50 BC, they have often been regarded as the earliest tessellated mosaics to survive. This date has now been challenged, though a *terminus ante quem* of 211 BC still seems to be likely.¹³ The three mosaics in the house combine several different techniques, ranging from irregular chips to carefully squared tesserae, as well as pieces cut to a special shape to fit a particular part of the design. One room has a panel at the door, with a white-on-black ivy scroll surrounding a white field with a fillet of twisted strands. Adjacent to it in the centre of the room is a rectangle containing an all-over pattern of maeander shown in perspective. Regularly squared, closely fitted tesserae are used in the maeander, much less regular tesserae in the ivy scroll and background to the fillet, and quite irregular white chips cover the rest of the floor. The house gets its name from another mosaic, which shows the eagle carrying off Ganymede (figure 19). Though most of the bird and the upper part of Ganymede's body are damaged, we see the boy in foreshortened frontal view falling to his knees, seized from behind by the eagle whose huge wings frame him. The position of the group creates a sense of diagonal movement from the lower right corner to the upper left, emphasised by Ganymede's outstretched left leg and the eagle's tail. The figures are set against a black ground, which uses tesserae nearly one centimetre square (figures 20, 21). The figures themselves are composed of slightly smaller tesserae, carefully squared and closely fitted, of a wide range of colours: shades of red, brown, yellow, grey, green, and blue, as well as black and white. In addition to limestone and slate, terracotta is used for red. Certain portions of the figures are made of single pieces cut to the required shape: Ganymede's big toes, his testicles, the pupils and whites of his eyes; while very thin strips are



18 Selinus, temple A, mortar pavement (*signinum*) with bull's head in wreath. Probably first half of the third century BC.



19 Morgantina, House of Ganymede, Ganymede and eagle. Central panel 1.05 m × 1.30 m. Second half of the third century BC.

⁷ Dunbabin, 'Technique and materials' (cit.n.1), 270–1; Salzmann 66, 125 no.169, pl.82. There is no evidence for its date.

⁸ Salzmann, 62–77, attempts to assign dates on the basis of style to many otherwise undated examples. The attempt seems to me to be over-schematic, assuming too much uniformity between different regions, and based on too few chronological fixed points.

⁹ Alexandria: below, n.18. Delos: below, n.37; Dunbabin, 'Technique

¹² K. Phillips, 'A Ganymede mosaic from Sicily', *ArtB* 42, 1960, 243–62; B. Tsakirgis, 'The decorated pavements of Morgantina I: the mosaics', *AJA* 93, 1989, 395–416, esp.397–400 nos.1–3; Boeselager 20–4; Salzmann 60–1, 73.

¹³ The traditional date, advanced by E. Sjöqvist, *AJA* 64, 1960, 131–3, was convincingly questioned by Salzmann 60–1, followed by Boeselager

24. However Salzmann's attempt to bring the date of the mosaic down as late as the early second century is rejected by Tsakirgis, *ibid.*, 412–13, who insists that it must be earlier than the Roman capture of Morgantina in 211 BC. The mosaics appear to be the original decoration of the house, whose construction is placed in the third century: *ibid.*, 397 n.12.



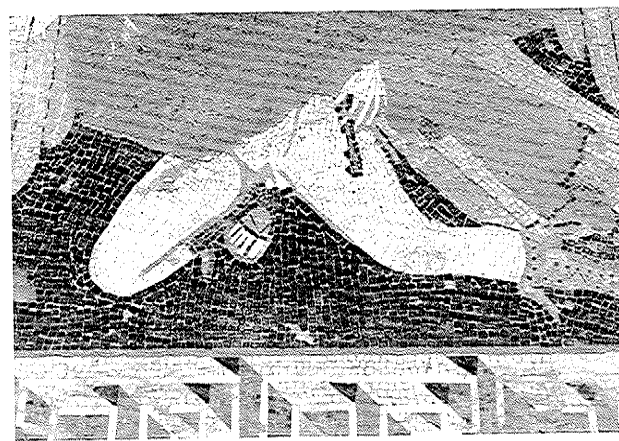
20 Morgantina, House of Ganymede, detail showing head and arm of Ganymede.

used in the eagle's wings and in the lacing of Ganymede's boots. Around this panel is a frame of multi-coloured maeander, seen in perspective. Here too specially shaped pieces are used: the white key of the maeander is formed by thin laminations, the longest almost seven centimetres in length, and triangles of dark slate are used in the angles. Finally the outer surround in this room consists of fairly regular white tesserae, set diagonally to the central panel.

The mosaics of the House of Ganymede show the co-existence of different techniques within the same house and inside the same pavement. It is clear that the distinction between them does not depend on chronology, but that they aim at different effects. More particularly, they demonstrate the advantages that recommended the use of regular tesserae, and show the mosaicists grappling with new aims and objectives. The maeanders, both as frame and all-over pattern, introduce illusionistic three-dimensional effects, which were impossible with the technique of pebble mosaics or with irregular chips; in the third room of the house another perspective maeander occurs in combination with a traditional flat version of the motif. Such effects are incompatible with the concept of the floor as a flat surface to be decorated, but they were to become enormously popular in the later Hellenistic period.¹⁴ The Ganymede panel also abandons the concept of the floor as uniform surface, and introduces the notion of the figured panel as a picture on the floor, in a way only seen before at Pella. The tesserae, with their various materials, offer a range of colours and shades never possible with pebbles, and

¹⁴ The perspective maeander and other three-dimensional motifs were popular also in painting from the late fourth century BC onwards: cf. M. Cristofani, 'Ricerche sulle pitture della tomba François di Vulci. I fregi decorativi', *DdA* 1, 1967, 190-3.

¹⁵ The theory of a Sicilian 'invention' of the technique was advanced by



21 Morgantina, House of Ganymede, detail showing lower body of Ganymede.

fit closely together to form a smooth continuous surface. The work does not have the subtlety of execution of the Pella pavements; but the intention to use the technique to imitate the effects of painting is unmistakable.

The Ganymede mosaic at Morgantina, therefore, shows a stage in the evolution of the tessellated technique which is still to some degree experimental, but which is beginning to use that technique to achieve sophisticated effects. If the *terminus ante quem* of 211 BC is accepted, it does not give a date for the 'invention' of the tessera; rather the mosaic illustrates the stage which the new technique had reached by the later third century: a stage fully compatible with the persistence both of older techniques and of more traditional methods of composition and concepts of the decorative role of the pavement. It presumably reflects developments in the neighbouring city of Syracuse (from which Hellenistic mosaics do not survive); but the theory which attributed the invention of the tessellated technique exclusively to Sicily is certainly to be dismissed.¹⁵ That 'invention' should be seen rather as the outcome of diverse experiments in several regions of the Greek world; and in Sicily itself as the blending of local technical traditions with new ideas from the eastern Mediterranean.

II

One city whose contribution to the development of mosaics was much discussed by earlier scholars was

Levi, *AMP* 5, and taken up forcefully by Phillips, 'A Ganymede mosaic' (cit. n. 12), 246-54. It is rejected by Salzmann 73-7; Boeselager 26-30; Daszewski 3-4, 23-4, 98. For Moschion's description of the Ship of Hieron, which has often been used in the argument, see Dunbabin *CMGR* v, 26.

Alexandria. As with many aspects of the role of that city in ancient art, the arguments were frequently based upon *a priori* assumptions, rather than upon the limited surviving evidence. More recent studies have discarded any suggestion that the definitive 'invention' of tessellated mosaic is to be attributed to Alexandria; but it is clear that it was a centre for production of high-quality work, both in the experimental phase of the third century BC and after more sophisticated techniques had been developed. An important piece of written evidence is a papyrus fragment in the Zenon archive datable between 256 and 246 BC, giving specifications for the laying of mosaics in a bath, apparently in Philadelphia in the Fayum.¹⁶ It proves that the use of mosaic was already established in Egypt at that date; it also implies that centralised control over production was exercised here by the royal court, which is stated to provide a model, *paradeigma*, for part of the design. It is less enlightening about the technique in which the mosaics are to be executed, since the terms used are ambiguous. It implies a contrast of technique between the outer border and the main design, but this could refer either to a combination of pebbles and irregular tesserae, or to regular tesserae and chips.

Combinations of pebbles and tesserae are attested at Alexandria itself on two mosaics. One is basically a pebble mosaic, with the figure of a warrior, light on dark with a few coloured details, surrounded by a frieze of griffins and other animals. Squared tesserae are used in a few places in the man and the animals, and specially shaped pieces for the eyes; lead strips mark outlines and some details.¹⁷ More impressive, and technically much more varied, is a mosaic from the Shatby district: Erotes hunt a stag at the centre, surrounded by a border of ivy scroll, while a frieze of animals, real and mythical, runs around all four sides¹⁸ (figures 22, 23, 24). Here tesserae form the principal material, very regularly squared in some parts of the borders, less regular and not closely set in the figures, but in no sense unshaped chips. Pebbles are reserved for special uses, where they create a desired contrast of texture: the hair of the Erotes, manes or bristles of some of the animals. In addition, specially shaped cut pieces are

¹⁶ P. Cairo Zenon 59665; Daszewski 6-14, with refs.; Ph. Bruneau, 'Un devis de pose de mosaïques: le papyrus Cairo Zen. 59665', in *Στήλη. Τόμος εις μνήμην Ν. Κοντολέοντος* (Athens 1980), 134-43; L. Koenen, *ZPE* 8, 1971, 276-7. Cf. below, ch. 16, section vi.

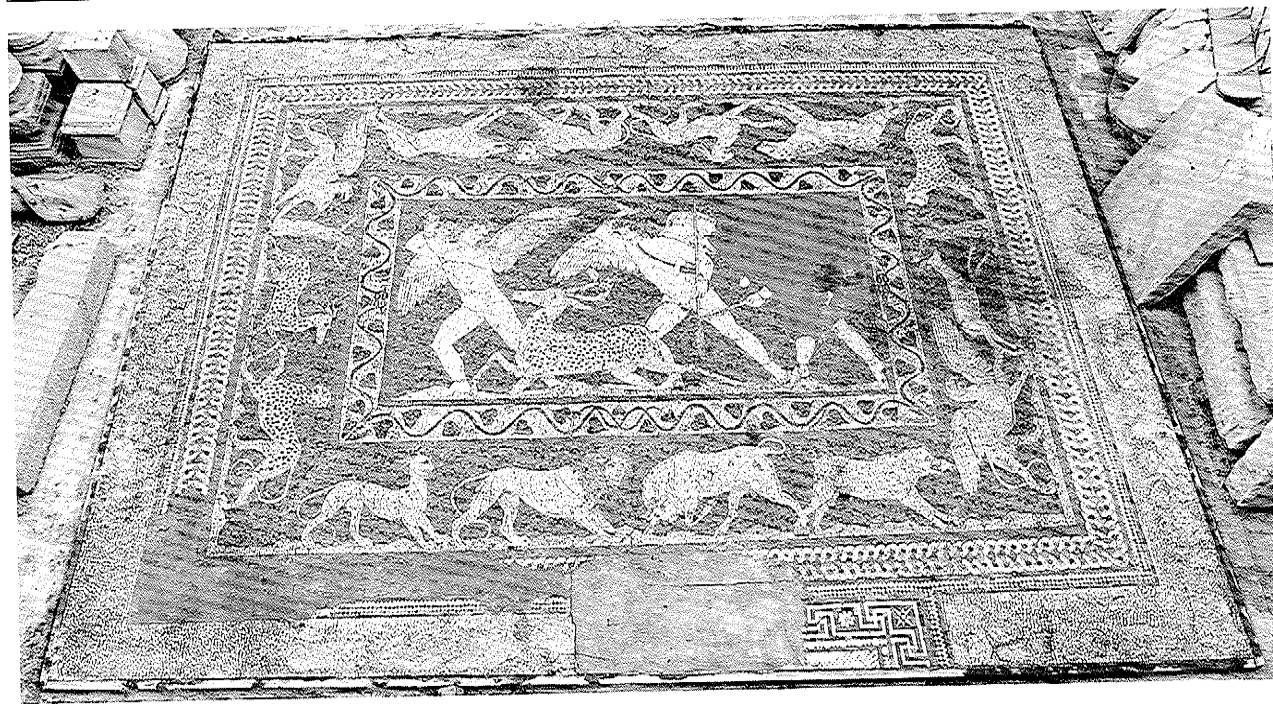
¹⁷ Daszewski 74, 101-2 cat. no. 1, 180, pls. 1-3; Salzmann 115 no. 133. The tesserae are used not only in specific areas, such as the shield, but also occasionally at various places in both man and animals; it is unlikely that they are an ancient repair, as Salzmann, 70 n. 602, suggests.

used, both in the figures, for instance the eyes and noses of the Erotes and the teeth of some animals, and extensively in the ornamental motifs. A panel placed at the entrance has borders of bead-and-reel, each piece specially cut, and of a maeander whose key is marked in part by laminations and which encloses stars and rosettes with their petals cut to shape. Lead strips are also used extensively: in the figures, for contours and internal details, and in the ornamental patterns, around the leaves and stem of the ivy scroll, or marking out the curves of a guilloche border, a pattern which was to be used frequently in later Hellenistic mosaics.

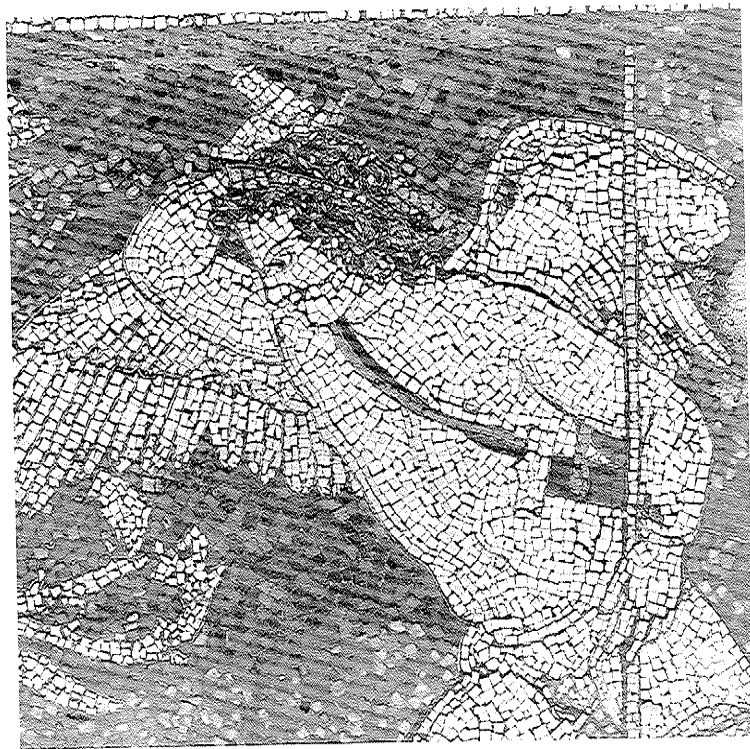
Stylistically the Shatby Stag Hunt is much more sophisticated than other examples of mixed technique. The figures, both in the central panel and in the animal frieze, stand on an uneven groundline, with bare trees growing from it at two places in the frieze. The hunt in the central panel is composed with overlapping figures creating an impression of depth, and the figures themselves are foreshortened, with emphatic diagonal poses. The figures are still predominantly light on dark, but the range of tones is wider; there is a variety of pinks, yellows, greys and beiges, as well as terracotta red, and shading is used to model the figures. In composition it still resembles the pebble mosaics, and indications of depth are much more limited than in the Morgantina Ganymede. But the craftsmen are beginning to realise the potential of a technique that is clearly still experimental, exploiting it for contrasts of texture, for clarity of outline, and for expressive detail. The overall effect has a certain mannered character, due in part to the exaggerated gestures and repetitive poses of the Erotes, in part to the over-precise rendering of certain details: the heads of the beasts with their exposed rows of teeth, or their carefully delineated claws. To some earlier commentators, these characteristics seemed neo-classical, confirming apparent topographical arguments for a late Hellenistic-early Roman date.¹⁹ Daszewski has shown that the topographical arguments are not valid, and that an early Ptolemaic date is archaeologically more plausible. He further argues that, following the technically less advanced stage represented

¹⁸ Daszewski 75-8, 103-10 cat. no. 2, 180-1, col. pl. c, pls. 4-7, 10-12; Salzmann 68-70, 116 no. 134.

¹⁹ B. Brown, *Ptolemaic Paintings and Mosaics and the Alexandrian Style* (Cambridge, MA 1957), 77-9, accepts *termini* of c. 50 BC to AD 50 proposed by E. Breccia, *BSRAA* 19, 1923, 161, on the grounds that in the earlier Hellenistic period the Shatby area was used as a cemetery. Daszewski 106 shows that there is no reason to think that the area from which the mosaic came ever formed part of the cemetery.



22 Alexandria, Shatby Stag Hunt. Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria Inv.21643. 5.25 m × 3.95 m. Third century BC.



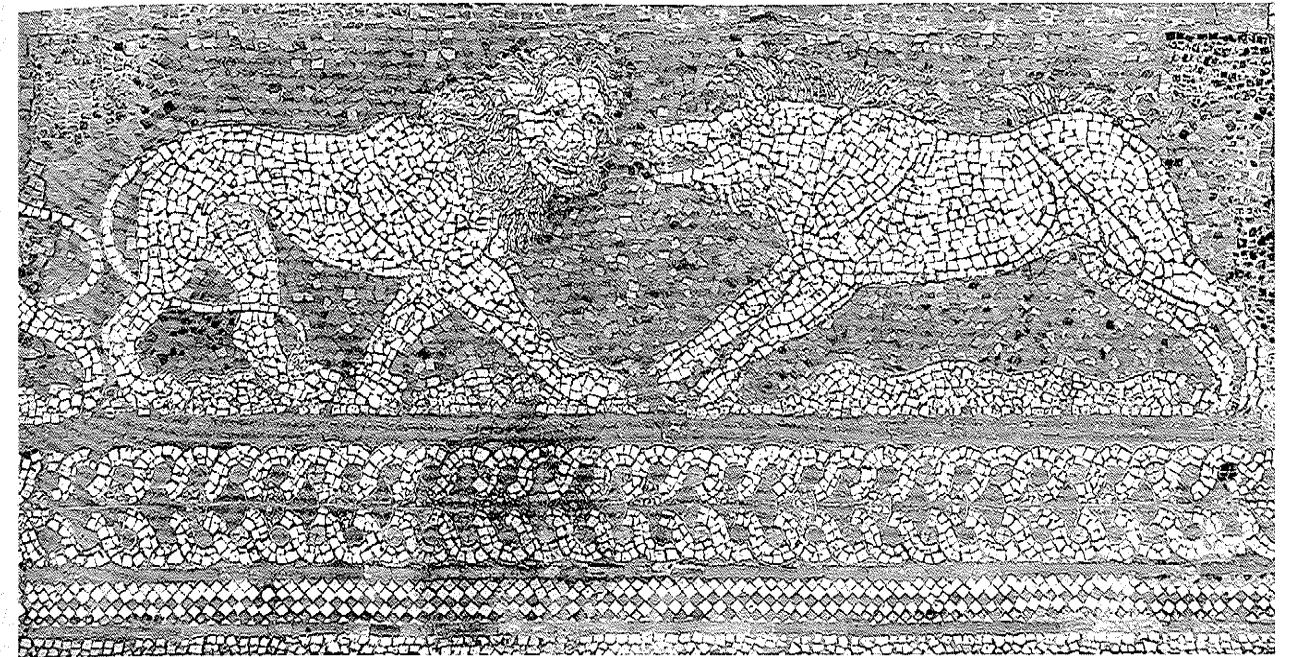
23 Alexandria, Shatby Stag Hunt, detail of Eros.

²⁰ Daszewski 105–9 assigns the Shatby Stag Hunt to 290–60 BC, and argues (179–82) against the substantially later date (end of third to first half of second century) adopted by Salzmann 69–70. The sequence that Daszewski proposes for the Alexandrian pavements is convincing, but the archaeological evidence does not justify the precise absolute dates he proposes.

by the pebble mosaic of the Warrior, it illustrates a process of experimentation and evolution under way in third-century Alexandria. Attempts to establish more precise dates for the stages of this evolution are, however, questionable; it is better in the present state of our knowledge to leave it as a process which led over the course of the third century to the development of the true tessellated technique.²⁰

Once that technique was established, it could be used to achieve effects quite different from anything seen before. Already at Pella and at Morgantina mosaics had attempted to imitate paintings; but the success of such imitations was restricted at Pella by the limits of the pebble technique, at Morgantina by the size of the tesserae used and by use of pieces cut specially to shape. But regular tesserae could be cut as small and fine as desired; the only limitation was that of the labour involved in cutting and laying them. Another Egyptian mosaic, from Thmuis in the Delta, reveals for the first time the full potential of the new technique in this respect²¹ (figure 25; plate 4). This has borders of fringe-like crenellation-pattern, of a double perspective meander, and of chain guilloche; although the outer fringe is uncompromisingly flat, the two richly coloured inner borders both

²¹ Daszewski 82–3, 142–58 cat.no.38, col.pl.A, pl.32; Brown, *Ptolemaic Paintings* (cit.n.19), 68, 70–4. For the technique and the materials used, which include blue and green faïence, see A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, M.-D. Nenna, 'Réflexions sur la couleur dans les mosaïques hellénistiques: Délos et Alexandrie', *BCH* 119, 1995, 534–8.



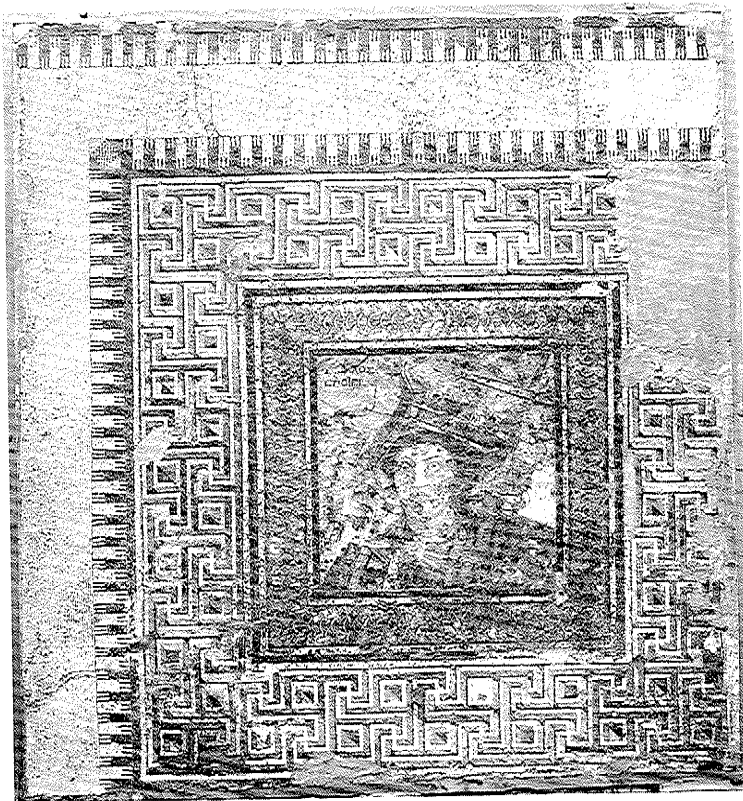
24 Alexandria, Shatby Stag Hunt, detail of animal frieze.

create an illusionistic three-dimensional quality. Framed in the centre of these is a panel, around 85 to 86 cm square, with an imposing female bust. She wears military costume, is crowned by a headdress formed of the prow of a ship, and carries a beribboned *stylis*, the flagstaff of a ship. She is evidently a personification, and has most often been identified as the personification of Alexandria. Daszewski suggests instead that she may be a Ptolemaic queen, perhaps Berenike II, though there would be no parallels for such a representation.²² The tesserae in the borders are very regular and close-set, ranging from just under 1 cm square in the outer fringe to 0.4 cm or less in the inner borders. In the figure tesserae are used which are often only a fraction of this size, down to as little as 0.1 cm square. These permit an incredible fineness of detail: individual strands of hair, the fringe of a garment, sea-creatures painted on the sides of the ship-headdress are all carefully represented. Even more important is the new use of colour. The figure is no longer a light silhouette on dark. Instead the background is light blue, the figure naturalistically coloured. An extraordinary range of fleshtones is used to model the face, with light falling from the viewer's right and half the face in shadow; the costume and headdress are richly coloured in bright reds, purple and gold, and also take account of the effects of shadow and of folds in the drapery. Colours merge into one another, especially in the flesh parts; there are no harsh outlines. The artist also uses small patches of contrasting colour to intensify the effect: the dark brown hair has streaks of

blue in it; there are grey-green shadows on the neck. Tinted mortar in places adds to the colouristic character, blending in with the tesserae. The lead strips which were used extensively on the earlier Egyptian mosaics have almost vanished from the figured panel, but are still used to outline the *stylis*, for which a firm straight outline was desired; they also outline the geometric borders, where they provide a clear edge for the craftsman to follow.

The Thmuis mosaic shows, fully developed, the technique which modern scholars call *vermiculatum*: minuscule fragments of stone, so small that the eye hardly distinguishes them as separate entities. Their use permits the artist genuinely to rival the effects of painting, assembling his colours as if they were strokes of the brush, and drawing on as wide a palette as that available to the painter. The mosaic in fact almost certainly copies a painting, of which a second, somewhat inferior copy exists also at Thmuis; it gives a better idea of the achievements of painting at the great Hellenistic courts than most of the scrappy fragments of surviving paintings. The artist has signed his work, *Sophilos epoiei*, 'Sophilos made this'; as with Gnosis at Pella, this is probably a sign of his reputation or his pride in his work, since signatures on Hellenistic mosaics appear to be confined to the more

²² Daszewski 146–58, on this mosaic and the second one from Thmuis representing the same subject, his cat.no.39. His interpretation is rejected by R.R.R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford 1988), 10 n.20. There are also no parallels for Alexandria in this guise.



25 Thmuis, mosaic signed by Sophilos. Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria Inv.21739. 2.77 m × 2.61 m. Probably first half of the second century BC.

ambitious works.²³ There is no architectural context, but it is hard to believe that the mosaic is not in some way a product of the royal court. Its date is again uncertain: it is usually placed around 200 BC, but a date somewhat later in the second century is at least as likely.²⁴ With it the technique which was still experimental in the works of the third century has reached complete artistic mastery; the uncertainties of chronology prevent our knowing whether this was the sudden achievement of an artist of genius, or a process which required many decades.²⁵

²³ Contrast their more indiscriminate use in the Roman period; cf. below, ch.16, section II.

²⁴ The date around 200 BC is proposed in Brown, *Ptolemaic Paintings* (cit.n.19), 67 n.197, 74. It is based on the letter-forms of the inscription, but these should not be pushed too far. She also quotes parallels with the Pergamene mosaics; these are all probably to be placed in the first half or middle of the second century (below, ns.31–2), and there seems no reason to exclude a similar date for the Sophilos mosaic.

²⁵ The quality of Alexandrian mosaics is also attested by recent finds in Alexandria itself from excavations on the site of the Palace of the Ptolemies, though only very preliminary information is so far available; one shows a dog, represented with extraordinary naturalism. See J.-Y. Empereur, *Dossiers d'Archéologie* 201, mars 1995, 82–3. For the signature of a mosaicist from Alexandria on a (rather commonplace) Hellenistic mosaic in Sicily, see below, ch.16, n.23.

III

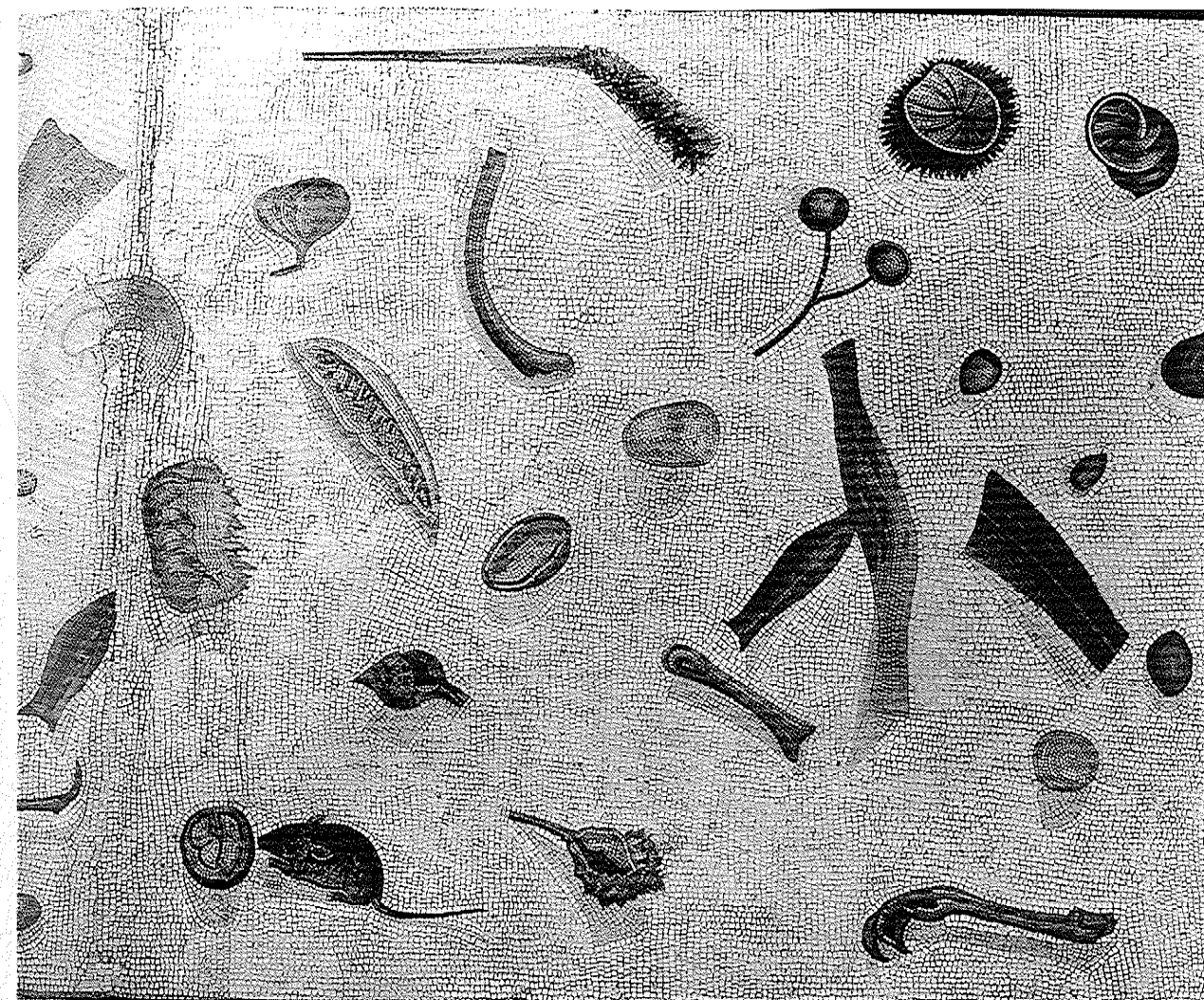
Another great Hellenistic city was evidently also a centre for mosaic production: Pergamon. The only mosaicist whose name is handed down in the literary tradition is Sosos, whom Pliny records to have been most famous in that genre. He goes on to say that Sosos 'laid at Pergamon what is called the *asarotos oikos* or unswept room, because on the pavement were represented the débris of a meal, and those things which are normally swept away, as if they had been left there, made of small tesserae of many colours.'²⁶ Sosos' original is lost, but a number of Roman copies and adaptations of it survive, the best from Rome in the Museo Gregoriano Profano of the Vatican, signed by its maker Heraklitos²⁷ (figure 26). It represents the débris of the meal with the greatest possible realism: fish-skeletons, chicken bones, sea-shells, lobster-claws, nuts, grape-stalks, and much more, casting shadows on the white ground where they lie. On the Vatican mosaic these cover a strip running around three sides of the mosaic, corresponding to the couches in a dining-room; a similar use may safely be assumed for Sosos' original, with an allusion to the luxury of the meals taking place in the room. The realism and *trompe l'œil* quality must have been a feature also of the original, another display of the astonishing effects that could be created in mosaic, and one very congenial to Hellenistic taste. Pliny goes on in the same passage to speak of a marvellous representation of 'a dove, drinking and casting the shadow of its head on the water, and others sunning and preening themselves on the rim of a *cantharus*'.²⁸ His words imply a connection between this and the *asarotos oikos*, though its nature is not made clear; the most plausible explanation is that the Drinking Doves formed the centrepiece of the pavement.²⁹ The mosaic

²⁶ Plin. *H.N.*36.184: *celeberrimus fuit in hoc genere Sosus qui Pergami stravit quem vocant asaroton oicon, quoniam purgamenta cenae in pavimentis quaeque everri solent velut relictia fecerat parvis e tessellis tinctisque in varios colores*. See also below, ch.16, n.3.

²⁷ Formerly in the Lateran collection: B. Nogara, *I Mosaici antichi conservati nei palazzi pontefici del Vaticano e del Laterano* (Milan 1910), 3–5, pls.v–vii; Helbig⁴ 1, no.1084 (K. Parlasca). For the *asarotos* theme in general, cf. H. Meyer, 'Zu neueren Deutungen von Asarotos Oikos und kapitolischem Taubenmosaik', *AA* 1977, 104–10; G. Hagenow, 'Der nichtausgekehrte Speisesaal', *RhM* 121, 1978, 260–75. For the signature, below, ch.16, n.15.

²⁸ Plin. *H.N.*36.184: *mirabilis ibi columba bibens et aquam umbra capitis infuscans; apricantur aliae scabentes sese in canthari labro*.

²⁹ K. Parlasca, 'Das pergamenische Taubenmosaik und der sogenannte Nestor-Becher', *Jdl* 78, 1963, 256–93 (with unconvincing interpreta-



26 Rome, mosaic of *asarotos oikos*, signed by Heraklitos, detail. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums. Overall length 4.05 m. Probably the second century AD.

was the source of numerous Roman copies and adaptations, which transmitted the motif throughout the whole of antiquity as late as the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (c.AD 440). The best of these, and probably also the closest to Sosos, is the famous Capitoline mosaic from Hadrian's Villa at Tibur (Tivoli), which conveys something of the quality of the original (figure 27). The minute tesserae, many of them here of glass, produce a work of astonishing painterly character, especially in the delicate grey-brown plumage of the birds, in the ripples on the liquid in the vase, on which the bird on the right

casts a shadow (a detail which Pliny singles out for mention in the original), and in the highlights on the silver vessel.³⁰

Pliny gives no date for Sosos' work at Pergamon, but it must belong to the period of the kings, before 133 BC. A few works from the Palace at Pergamon itself, now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, also testify to the level of production there; they are almost certainly to be placed in the reigns of Eumenes II (197–159 BC) or Attalos II (159–138 BC). In the so-called Altar Room in Palace v was a mosaic which combined small panels and bands

tion); M. Dunderer, 'Die antiken Pavimenttypen und ihre Benennungen', *Jdl* 102, 1987, 368–70; contra H. Herter, 'Die durstigen Tauben', *GrazBeitr* 5, 1976, 123–42; Meyer, 'Zu neueren Deutungen' (cit.n.27). The words *mirabilis ibi* cannot be taken to refer to a different mosaic at Pergamon, since the city has been mentioned only casually as the location of the *asarotos oikos*, but must refer back to

the immediately preceding description of the *asarotos* mosaic itself.

³⁰ Parlasca, *ibid.*; cf. also below, ch.4, n.36. M. Dunderer, 'Das Kapitolinische Taubenmosaik – Original des Sosos?', *RömMitt* 98, 1991, 189–97, argues convincingly that the Capitoline mosaic is not Hadrianic but a Hellenistic work reused in the Villa. That it is Sosos' original itself, as he further suggests, is not susceptible of proof.



27 Tibur, Hadrian's Villa, Doves of Sosos. Musei Capitolini, Rome. 0.98 m × 0.85 m. Second to first century BC (? or early second century AD).

containing looped garlands of fruit and flowers³¹ (figure 28). The surviving panels showed tragic and comic masks, and a parrot; the latter, though now in miserable condition, is of outstandingly fine workmanship, with tesserae as small as half a millimetre in places, and an extraordinary range of colours taken from both stone and glass. Like the doves on the Capitoline mosaic, it is seen against a dark ground. The garland is better preserved; against a light ground it combines a rich variety of flowers and

fruit, bound with ribbon, with small birds pecking at it. The careful observation of nature, and very delicate rendering of animal and floral forms, are among the most remarkable features of these Pergamene mosaics, as fine as any example known from antiquity.

A second room in Palace v contained a mosaic of similarly fine workmanship³² (figure 29). A central area, largely destroyed, was surrounded by a series of borders, among them a scroll against a black ground. This is a

³¹ G. Kawerau, Th. Wiegand, *AvP* 5.1, *Die Paläste der Hochburg* (Berlin/Leipzig 1930), 58–63, pls.v, xii–xv, text plate xxvi; D. Salzmann, 'Mosaiken und Pavimente in Pergamon', *AA* 1991, 436–7, fig.4, correcting the descriptions in earlier publications; I. Kriseleit, *Antike Mosaiken* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin 1985), 11–13 no.2, 45 no.13, for an account of the mosaic's present condition.

³² Kawerau, Wiegand, *ibid.*, 63–5, pls.xvi–xix, text plates xxvii–xxxviii; Kriseleit, *ibid.*, 8–10 no.1; G. Sauron, *MEFRA* 90, 1978, 717–18, 727–8; Salzmann, *ibid.*, 436, on the fragments left *in situ* by the excavators, which change the traditional reconstruction of the mosaic. Salzmann also upholds the traditional dating to the period of the kings, before 133 BC, against the doubts of Ch. Börker, *Jdl* 88, 1973, 296–9.



28 Pergamon, Palace v, Altar Room, Parrot Mosaic, detail of garland. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Height of garland zone 0.50 m. First half to mid-second century BC.

more artificial construction than the garlands of the previous mosaic, with fruit and flowers of various kinds growing together, some natural, some invented; tiny figures of Erotes play among them. But the individual plant forms are rendered with delicacy and naturalism, as are the grasshoppers that perch on them at intervals. The central field originally included three panels at the top; beneath was a wide area with traces of a floral design. In the centre of this there remains the signature of the artist Hephaistion, shown as if written on a piece of parchment (itself a characteristically Pergamene product), one of whose corners has come free of the wax that held it and curls up casting a shadow on the background: another example of the *trompe l'œil* realism dear to this school. The panels at the top were *emblemata*, independent panels made on their own supporting slabs of shelly mortar; one had been removed in antiquity and replaced by a tile, the others were destroyed.³³

The mosaics from Pergamon, like that from Thmuis, belong to the finest products of the Hellenistic mosaicists: fine picture-mosaics in *vermiculatum*, imitating the effects of painting. Such pieces were of course excep-

tional, the work of outstanding artists and incredibly laborious to produce. They were highly prized in antiquity, as we can tell from those which have been carefully removed from their original setting, as in the case of the Hephaistion mosaic. It was not indeed necessary for them to be laid on the spot; *emblemata* were made separately and brought in a finished state to be set into their final destinations. The production of *emblemata* permitted the artist to work with much greater convenience in his own workshop; he was not tied to a specific architectural setting. The character of such mosaics as 'pictures on the floor', valued for their individual artistic qualities, was clearly enhanced by such treatment. It raised also the possibility of a divorce between the fine artist responsible for the *emblemata*, and humbler craftsmen who laid the rest of the floor. However no such divorce is perceptible on the mosaics from Pergamon just discussed. As they show, figured decoration can take other forms than that of a central panel, and the borders can include sections in a

³³ For other Hellenistic mosaics at Pergamon and their later successors, see below, ch.13, ns.3–5.



29 Pergamon, Palace V, mosaic with signature of Hephaestion, detail of signature. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. First half to mid-second century BC.

technique very nearly as fine as that of the figured panels.³⁴

IV

Hellenistic mosaics of less exceptional character have been found at various sites of Greece and Asia Minor, as well as further afield at Arsameia on the Nymphaios, and in Cyrene.³⁵ But at only one site in the eastern Mediterranean do they appear in sufficient numbers to allow general conclusions about their use and nature: on the island of Delos. Philippe Bruneau has catalogued 354 pavements from the island, in a variety of techniques. A very small number go back to the pre-Hellenistic period; one is datable to the Imperial period; the vast majority of those which can be dated on external grounds belong to the end of the second and beginning of the first century BC. Given that almost all the undated examples are uniform with this group in technique and style, Bruneau concludes that they may all be placed with a high degree of probability between about 130 and 88 BC.³⁶ They therefore provide a rare opportunity to study the range of tech-

niques, compositional methods, and motifs in use more or less simultaneously on a single site.

The techniques in use at Delos include pebble mosaics, mostly very simple, some but not all of which go back to a date earlier than the main body of Delian mosaics. Chip-pavements made of pieces of whitish marble are extremely common, forming probably the largest single category of pavements; coloured chips are occasionally found, as well as pavements of ceramic fragments (usually broken amphorae), used alone or in combination; and there are a few mortar-and-aggregate pavements of Italian type. Chip-pavements and, less often, pebbles are also found in combination with tessellated, the coarser technique being used for edging bands to surround a finer central carpet or panel; the contrast in texture serves to emphasise the finer workmanship in the centre (figures 30, 31). Within the tessellated mosaics Bruneau draws a distinction between the normal *opus tessellatum*, i.e. work using regular tesserae of standard size, and the much finer *vermiculatum*, which he defines as using tesserae less than four millimetres square. The distinction is not absolutely sharp; the two techniques can be combined in different areas of the same pavement (again creating a contrast in textures), occasionally even within the same area.³⁷ Plain floors are substantially more common than decorated, and the latter are predominantly geometric; figured scenes and motifs account for only twenty-five of the total number of mosaics, and are mostly concentrated in a few rich houses.

The mosaics are found in a number of sanctuaries and a few public buildings, principally those opening off the Agora of the Italians; but the great majority come from private houses. The more utilitarian types of flooring are used frequently in the service areas of the houses, though their use is not confined to such settings; decorated mosaics tend to be used in the more public and prestigious areas of the house. Characteristic of the Delian houses is the so-called *oecus* or 'broad room' opening off the peristyle, one of whose functions certainly was the reception and entertainment of guests;³⁸ the more richly

³⁴ It is not clear whether the Thmuis mosaic is a true *emblemata*; it shows no signs of a setting tray of terracotta or stone, but might be a 'disguised *emblemata*', set on a backing which has now disappeared: cf. Daszewski 82–4, 88.

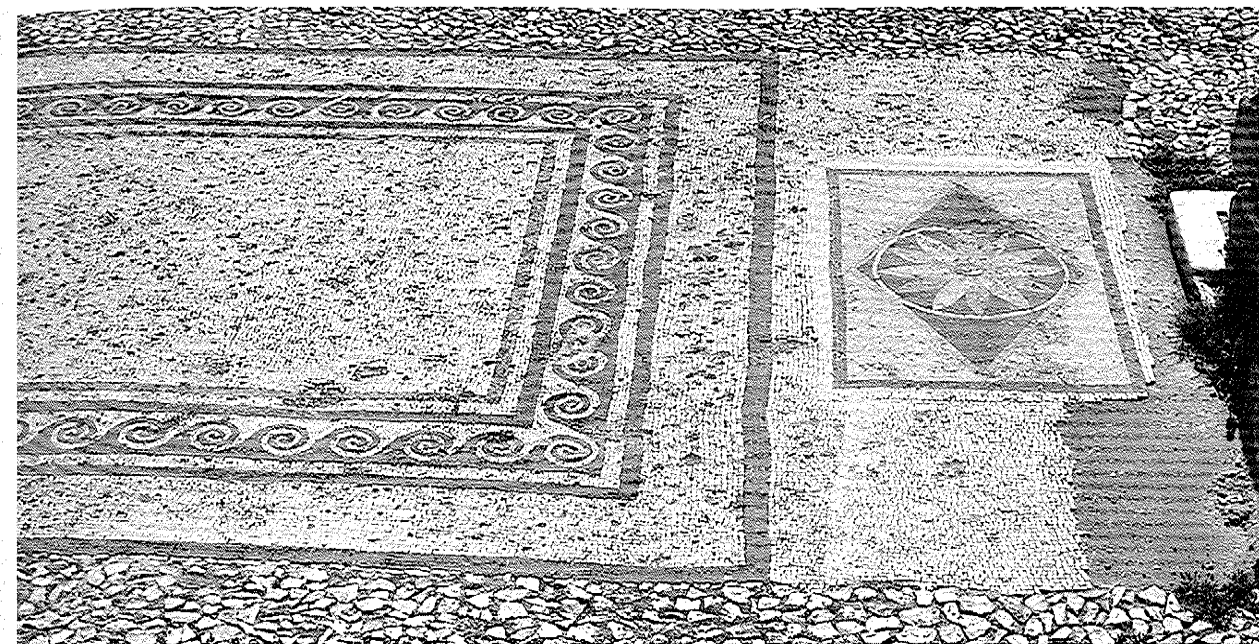
³⁵ I. Lavin, in F.K. Dörner, Th. Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios. Die Ausgrabungen im Hierotheseion des Mithradates Kallinikos von 1953–1956* (IstForsch 23, Berlin 1963), 191–6, pls. 46–7, plan 11; W. Hoepfner, *Arsameia am Nymphaios II* (IstForsch 33, Tübingen 1983), 12–13, pls. 6–7, plan 2; I. Baldassarre, 'Mosaici ellenistici a Cirene e a

Delo: rapporti e differenze', *QAL* 8, 1976, 193–221. Cf. also V. Giannouli, A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Deux mosaïques hellénistiques à Samos', *BCH* 112, 1988, 545–68.

³⁶ Bruneau, *Delos* 95–9.

³⁷ Bruneau, *Delos* 13–36 for all this.

³⁸ On these rooms and their function, cf. J. Chamonard, *Delos* 8, *Le quartier du théâtre* (Paris 1922), 1, 169–74; W. Hoepfner, E.-L. Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland* (2nd edn, Munich 1994), 295–7.



30 Delos, House III Q, Room E, tessellated panel at centre of chip-pavement. Main panel 2.58 m × 2.12 m; entrance panel 0.83 m × 2.12 m. c.130–88 BC.



31 Delos, House III N, Room 1, tessellated panel at centre of chip-pavement. Main area, excluding edging bands, approx. 3.90 m × 3.92 m. c.130–88 BC.



32 Delos, Agora of the Italians, niche 10, geometric mosaic. 3.22 m × 1.58 m. c.130–88 BC.

decorated floors are usually found in these rooms, and in the peristyle through which guests would pass to reach them. Fragments, many of them in *vermiculatum*, which have fallen from the upper storeys, show that these too were sometimes lavishly decorated.

Among the decorated floors, the most characteristic design consists of a central carpet-like tessellated area, square or oblong, surrounded by an edging band in one of the coarser techniques. The 'carpet' has multiple geometric frames and borders, and a central field which may be plain, covered with an all-over motif, or may contain one or more independent panels, figured or ornamental (figures 31, 32). There is often a separate threshold panel at the entrance, decorated independently from the rest (figure 30). On many floors the most striking feature is the number and complexity of the borders, and some are very finely executed. The geometric motifs include, beside long-established flat patterns such as wave-band and crenellations, several which are exploited for their three-dimensional character: perspective maeander (figure 32), chain guilloche, and bead-and-reel. One three-dimensional pattern is mostly used as an all-over design: lozenges of three or more different colours are combined to form the illusion of cubes seen in perspective. This *trompe l'œil* design was evidently especially appreciated, since it occurs at least fifteen times; it illustrates very well the fascination felt by the Hellenistic artists for illusionistic effects, and the ambiguity of their attitude to the decoration of the floor, where effects of relief are deliberately contrasted with flat surface decor.³⁹

³⁹ Bruneau, *Délos* 46–56, 67–9; H. Joyce, 'Form, function and technique in the pavements of Delos and Pompeii', *AJA* 83, 1979, 256–8. See also A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Mosaïques et dallages dans le monde grec aux époques classique et hellénistique', *CMGR* v, 19–24, on the derivation of the motif from pavements of *opus sectile*.

⁴⁰ Bruneau, *Délos* 32–5 (on *vermiculatum* in general), 100–1 (on the

The figured scenes include some in the *vermiculatum* technique as fine as any in Pergamon or Alexandria. Some of the panels in *vermiculatum* are probably disguised *emblemata*, though there are no examples with a tile or slab as support. But one, the mosaic of Dionysus on a leopard from the House of the Masks, is set slightly askew, while a second Dionysiac mosaic from the House of Dionysus fits awkwardly with its surrounding borders: both are likely to have been made separately (figures 38, 33). Such panels were probably made on the island, whether in the artist's atelier or on the spot, rather than imported, as the limited petrographic analyses that have been carried out show that local stone was used. In at least eight cases there is evidence that panels (presumably figured) now missing were deliberately removed in antiquity, a sign that they were valued as works of art, distinct from the rest of the pavement.⁴⁰

Of the two Dionysiac mosaics just mentioned, one, with a winged Dionysiac figure riding a tiger from the House of Dionysus, is among the finest of the *vermiculatum* panels on Delos⁴¹ (figure 33; plate 5). The subject resembles the Dionysus on a leopard in the House of the Masks, and has forerunners on pebble mosaics at Pella and Eretria, but the wings here suggest a Dionysiac *daimon* rather than the god himself. It exploits to the full the colouristic possibilities of the technique, with minute tesserae (many less than one millimetre square) in an extraordinarily wide range of colours. The materials used for the tesserae include not only natural stone and terracotta, but also artificial materials such as glass and faience (a glazed siliceous paste, of Egyptian origin), especially for greens and blues. The mortar of the setting bed is also tinted to enhance the effect, blending with the tesserae which it surrounds so that the interstices can barely be distinguished; and some exceptionally fine details, such as the ends of the tiger's whiskers, are simply drawn in the mortar. Colour is used very subtly to model form and to indicate the effects of light, for instance in the flesh tones of the face of the Dionysiac figure, the eyes of man and beast (Bruneau counts twenty-nine tesserae in the pupil alone of the tiger's left eye), and the animal's fur. The background is

removal of *emblemata*). For the two Dionysiac mosaics, see below, ns. 41, 46.

⁴¹ Bruneau, *Délos* 289–93 no. 293, figs. 247–53, pl. c.1–2; M. Bulard, 'Peintures murales et mosaïques de Délos', *Mon Piot* 14, 1908, 199–203, pls. xiv–xv.



33 Delos, House of Dionysus, *emblemata* with tiger-rider. 1.57 m × 1.29 m. c.130–88 BC.

black, following a tradition which goes back to pebble mosaics.⁴²

A mosaic exceptional both in design and quality, and in some of the motifs used, occupies the courtyard of the peristyle of the House of the Dolphins⁴³ (figures 34, 35). This has a circular format, unusual for Delos, within a square outer border of crenellations. In the corners between square and circle are pairs of dolphins ridden by tiny winged figures wearing a *chiton* and carrying the emblems of various gods: respectively thyrsus, *caduceus*, and trident (the fourth is missing). The dolphins are rendered in the tessellated technique, with tesserae of normal size (around 0.8 cm), but much smaller tesserae, down to as little as 0.1 cm, are used for the figures. The central area has a succession of concentric borders, where again the size of the tesserae and fineness of workmanship varies from part to part; the finer portions include a perspective maeander, a band with griffin *protomai* growing from a leafy scroll, and a (damaged) floral garland. In the centre was a complex rosette on a black ground, now largely destroyed. The mosaic is one of the only two at Delos

to bear a signature; its author was a Phoenician, [Askle]piades from Arados (figure 36). Another link with the Near East occurs in the vestibule of the same house, where the floor is decorated in black and white with an emblem known as the 'sign of Tanit', most common in Carthage but found also in Phoenicia.⁴⁴ It is set here presumably for protection, and suggests that the owner of the house may have been, like the mosaicist he employed, a Phoenician. It testifies to the role of Delos as a centre of Mediterranean trade, attracting a cosmopolitan population both of wealthy homeowners and of craftsmen. In the same way, the presence of numerous Italians in Delos is reflected in the type of pavements found in the House of Fourni, which include several floors of *signinum*; these may reflect the presence of Italian craftsmen, owners, or both.⁴⁵

One of the most richly decorated houses on Delos is the House of the Masks, whose wealth and unusual plan suggest that it may not have been an ordinary domestic dwelling⁴⁶ (figure 37). The courtyard of the peristyle here has a pavement of marble chips, and a corridor has one of

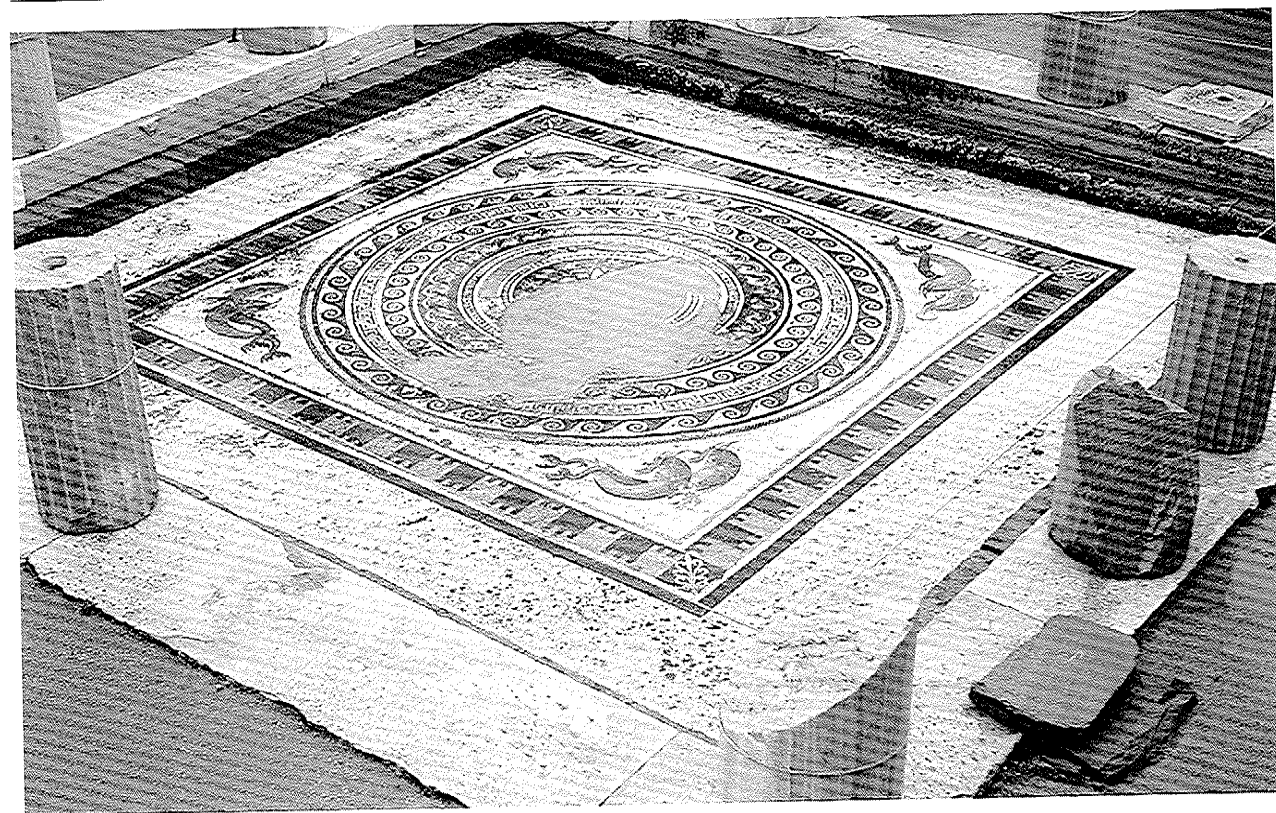
⁴² For the materials and technique, cf. A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, M.-D. Nenna, 'L'emploi du verre, de la faïence et de la peinture dans les mosaïques de Délos', *BCH* 116, 1992, 607–31; Guimier-Sorbets and Nenna, *BCH* 119, 1995, 529–63.

⁴³ Bruneau, *Délos* 235–9 no. 210, figs. 168–75, pl. b.1–2.

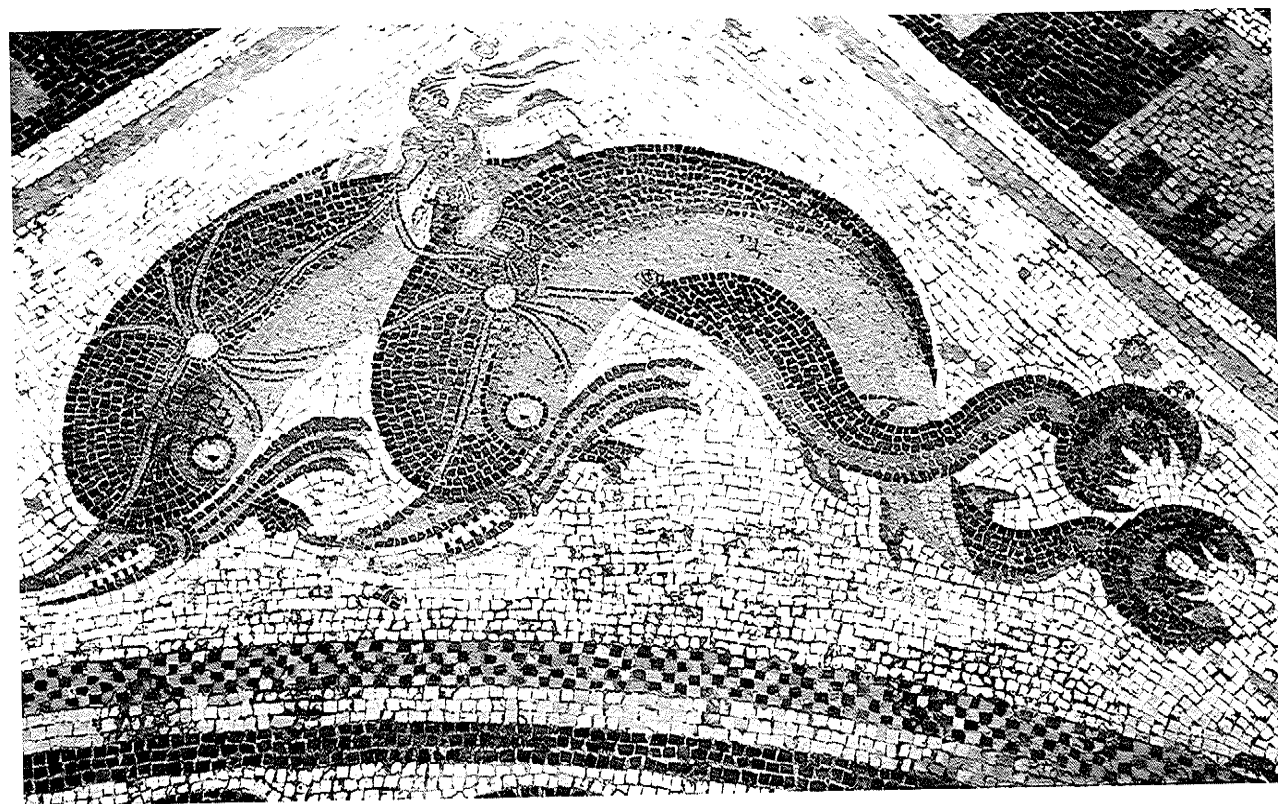
⁴⁴ Bruneau, *Délos* 71, 235 no. 209, fig. 167; also 111–13, 116. For the 'sign of Tanit', see above, n. 11; below, ch. 7, n. 5.

⁴⁵ Bruneau, *Délos* 113–16, 305–16 nos. 325–39.

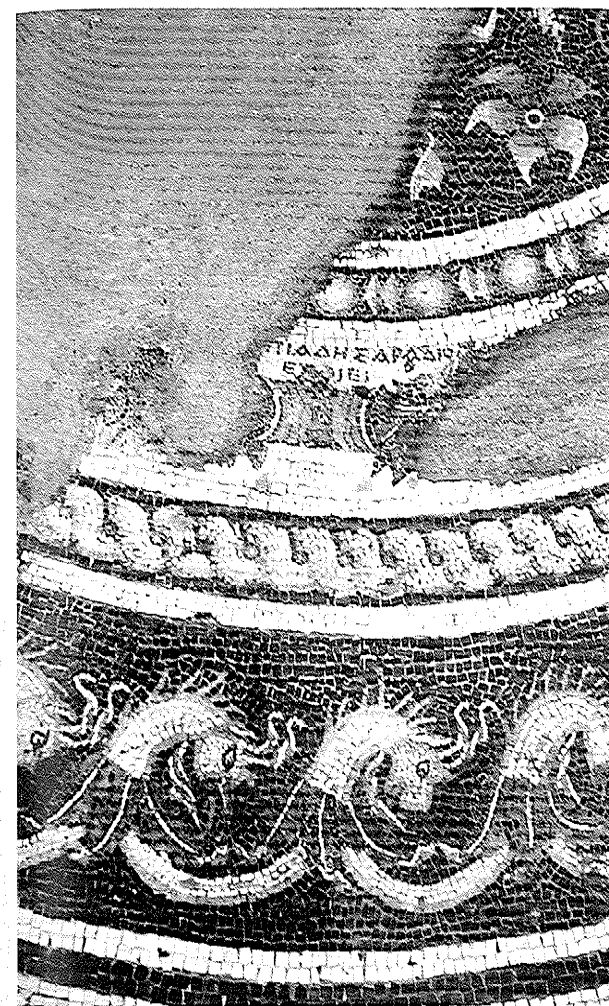
⁴⁶ Bruneau, *Délos* 240–60 nos. 213–19; J. Chamonard, *Délos* 14, *Les Mosaïques de la Maison des Masques* (Paris 1933).



34 Delos, House of the Dolphins, courtyard. c.130–88 BC.



35 Delos, House of the Dolphins, courtyard, detail showing dolphins in the north-west corner.



36 Delos, House of the Dolphins, courtyard, detail of border with signature.

amphora fragments. The decorative mosaics are found in four rooms opening off one end of the peristyle. Two are 'broad rooms' probably used for dining; one a huge room, almost certainly designed for the reception of guests; the fourth is smaller. One of the 'broad rooms' has a rectangular 'carpet' with numerous borders, and a threshold panel. At the centre of the 'carpet' is the *emblema* with Dionysus riding a leopard, against a black ground like the other Dionysiac rider, but less finely executed (figure 38). It is set between two lozenges in coarser technique, which contain centaurs. The other 'broad room' has a similar rectangular carpet, this time containing two rosettes, with an amphora and palm branch between them: the latter a later insertion into the mosaic. In the large room the whole central field is decorated with *trompe l'œil* cubes, and down either side runs a strip with a frieze of masks in an ivy scroll, from which the house gets its name. Finally

the small room has a central panel, rather coarsely executed, showing a dancing figure, perhaps a Silenus, and a flute player, against a black ground. The mosaics of the house are in general less finely executed than many other Delian mosaics; apart from the Dionysus *emblema*, all the figured motifs are in the tessellated technique, with tesserae normally around 0.5–0.8 cm. They illustrate that this technique could be used to imitate the effects of the finer *vermiculatum* in figure scenes and motifs, even though it was incapable of achieving the same degree of pictorial naturalism.⁴⁷

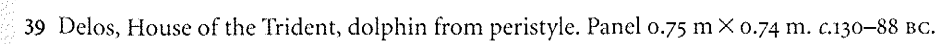
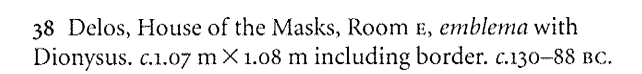
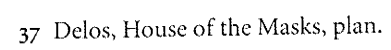
Not all the figured motifs in the tessellated technique imitate *vermiculatum*. Bruneau has pointed to a group of pavements on which emblematic motifs are portrayed against a plain white ground in black, or with a very limited addition of another colour, usually red. The 'sign of Tanit' in the House of the Dolphins belongs in this group; in the House of the Trident the mosaic of the peristyle contains panels with a black dolphin wrapped around a red anchor, and a black trident, both on a white ground. (figures 39, 306). There may be a symbolic or emblematic function here: this is certainly the case with the 'sign of Tanit', while the emblems in the House of the Trident might allude to maritime interests on the part of the proprietors. They represent a contrary trend to the rich polychromy, three-dimensional effects, and pictorialism otherwise characteristic of Hellenistic mosaics, and use the medium as two-dimensional surface decoration, anticipating the black-and-white pavements that develop in Italy slightly later.⁴⁸

Bibliography

Ph. Bruneau, 'Prolongements de la technique des mosaïques de galets en Grèce', *BCH* 93, 1969, 308–32; K.M.D. Dunbabin, 'Technique and materials of Hellenistic mosaics', *AJA* 83, 1979, 265–77; Salzmänn 59–77; Daszewski; Bruneau, *Délos*.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bruneau, *Délos* 33. The masks in the House of the Masks may be contrasted with those, similar but much finer, from the *flot des Bijoux*: *ibid.*, 156–69 no.68; Ph. Bruneau, G. Siebert, *BCH* 93, 1969, 289–96.

⁴⁸ Bruneau, *Délos* 86–8, 235 no.209, 261–2 no.228, figs.211, 213–14; he questions (72) any interpretation of these emblems as alluding to the special interests of their owners. For the beginnings of the Italian black-and-white style, cf. below, ch.4, section 1.



Hellenistic mosaics in Italy

IN MOSAIC, as in other arts, Italy in the last two centuries BC absorbed the full impact of Hellenistic influence. A local western tradition already existed, which covered both the techniques of laying pavements and the methods used for their decoration.¹ The Italian mosaics of the late Republic and early Empire are a product of the confluence of these two elements. At the beginning the Hellenistic stream can be clearly distinguished from the local traditions; we may safely assume either the actual presence of Greek craftsmen in Italy, or the importation of works ready-made from the Greek East. The present chapter will study the fine pictorial mosaics in the *vermiculatum* technique found in the Campanian cities, principally Pompeii, and in Rome and the cities around it. These belong to the same tradition as similar works from the eastern Mediterranean discussed in the previous chapter; the broader development in Italy of mosaics of all types and techniques is reserved for the following chapter. The distinction means that in this chapter the fine mosaics are discussed in isolation from the coarser designs used as surround, and from contemporary pavements in other rooms of the same house; but the evidence for the removal in antiquity of such mosaics from their settings and for their reuse suggests that the distinction would correspond to the attitude with which their owners regarded them, as independent works of art.

Particular problems beset the study of the works discussed here. Their high quality and pictorial character attracted the attention of treasure-hunters and collectors in early excavations; as a result, very few are in their original context, and many were extracted without any record of their setting or even of their provenance. In addition, many have suffered extensive restoration, which has sometimes drastically altered their appearance. Even

when their context is known, this does not necessarily establish their date of production, since most of them are *emblemata*, which could have been reused in a new setting. As a result, the chronology of most of these works is usually more problematic than that of other mosaics.

One region from which Hellenistic influence spread to Italy was Sicily. The island, as seen above, had its own local traditions; but it also shared in full in the Hellenistic *koine* of the later centuries BC. The later mosaics at Morgantina (all non-figured), and others at Tyndaris, Soluntum, and Tauromenium (Taormina) resemble those at Delos and other Eastern Hellenistic centres in composition, repertory of motifs, and technical aspects. There are only a few recognisably local features, principally the use of *signinum* in combination with tessellated mosaic.² The most important mosaic in *vermiculatum* from Sicily is the Hunting Scene from the Piazza della Vittoria in Panormus (Palermo).³ It was set in a surround of regular white tesserae, with a threshold panel of perspective cubes in *opus sectile*, and framed by a fine border of a garland laden with fruit and flowers, with masks at the angles, similar to others in Pompeii and elsewhere in Italy.⁴ The damaged central panel was laid on the spot; it was not an *emblema* as I have defined it in the previous chapter. It contained scenes of the hunt of a lion and a boar, set in a rocky landscape. Among the figures are a fleeing archer in Persian dress, and a mounted hunter who strikes at the lion with his lance. Comparisons with representations of royal hunts on the Alexander sarcophagus and the frieze of the Great Tomb at Vergina have led to the identification of the mosaic as derived from a famous original, presumably a painting representing either Alexander or one of his successors hunting.

At Pompeii the use of fine picture-mosaics of this sort

was a rarity, confined to a few rich houses; it belongs among the marks of Hellenistic taste and luxury which characterised the upper classes there from about the mid-second century BC onwards, especially in their private dwellings.⁵ Foremost among these is the House of the Faun (VI 12,2), the most opulent, in its late second-century phase, of the houses of pre-Roman Pompeii. Besides the famous Alexander mosaic, this house contained two figured friezes and six figured panels, as well as floors of *opus sectile* and of a variety of other techniques. Although there are some signs of later alterations, most of the fine mosaics probably belong to the last decades of the second and very beginning of the first century BC, the same period as the lavish First Style stuccoes and paintings.⁶ No other Pompeian house had as many fine mosaics as this, but some contained two or three. Apart from the two mosaics signed by Dioskourides of Samos from the so-called 'Villa of Cicero', which form a pair, there is no thematic connection between different figured scenes from the same house. But there are sometimes signs that a figured mosaic was chosen to suit its location: thus an erotic scene of satyr and maenad in the House of the Faun comes from a bedroom, a panel with fish and marine life in the same house from a *triclinium* (dining-room), while a *triclinium* table in House 1 5,2 had an *emblema* set into its surface showing a skull and other allegorical symbols of the fragility of life, a theme much favoured as a talking-point at late Republican and early Imperial dinner parties.⁷

Unlike many of the contemporary fine mosaics from the eastern Mediterranean, the majority of those at Pompeii are true *emblemata* set in their own trays of stone or terracotta. These were obviously made in the artists' studios, before being brought to their final destination.

This raises the question whether they were made in Pompeii itself, or imported ready-made from elsewhere. The signature of Dioskourides of Samos, in Greek, on the two *emblemata* from the 'Villa of Cicero' gives no indication of their place of manufacture; the mention of his origin makes it likely that he was working somewhere other than in Samos itself, but this might have been any of the Hellenistic centres of production or Pompeii itself⁸ (figures 44, 45). Egyptian associations have often been identified in the fine mosaics of the House of the Faun; these could be explained either by the importation of the works from Alexandria, or by the presence of Alexandrian craftsmen in Pompeii. Some of the materials used have been identified as local, but the samples appear all to have been taken from borders or from the foundation layers, and tell us nothing about the fine mosaics themselves. It seems *a priori* likely that works which fit exactly into their architectural setting, such as the Alexander mosaic itself and some of the friezes, were laid on the spot, though even this has been disputed.⁹ However, the recurrence of identical subjects, such as Theseus and the Minotaur, in very similar form implies the existence of local workshops, turning out repeated versions of the same scene; and it may safely be assumed that some of the artists producing mosaics of this type were operating in Pompeii and the neighbouring towns.¹⁰ That *emblemata* could be articles of commerce is shown by the discovery of some out of any setting, among articles apparently intended for sale in a shop or workshop; but this says nothing about their ultimate origin.¹¹

When the original setting of the *emblemata* is known, they were usually the centrepieces of plain pavements in white tesserae, or in one of the other techniques in use at the time. A more coherent treatment of the floor is found

¹ Cf. above, ch.2, ns.10–11.

² Boeslager 34–78; B. Tsakirgis, 'The decorated pavements of Morgantina 1: the mosaics', *AJA* 93, 1989, 395–416, nos.5–13; M. de Vos, 'Pittura e mosaico a Solunto', *BABesch* 50, 1975, 195–224; also the mosaics from Rabat on Malta, T. Ashby, *JRS* 5, 1915, 34–8, pls.iii–v; Pernice 6–12, pls.1–3. For the earlier Sicilian mosaics, see above, ch.2, ns.10–15.

³ Boeslager 47–52, who suggests a date in the late second to early first century BC; T. Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder des 5. Jh. v. Chr.* (Würzburg 1973), 186–9, with refs.

⁴ Pompeii: e.g. below, ns.25, 31; other parallels at Malta (above, n.2), and Privernum (below, n.35). Less close is the mask-and-garland frieze on the mosaic from the Îlot des Bijoux at Delos, Bruneau, *Délos* 156–69 no.68.

⁵ M. de Vos, 'Paving techniques at Pompeii', *ArchNews* 16, 1991, 38, estimates about forty figured *emblemata* recorded at Pompeii, distributed over twenty-one houses.

⁶ Pernice, 90–5, believes many of the mosaics to be later additions, from the period of the early Second Style; but cf. de Vos, *ibid.*, 46–7; A. Laidlaw, *The First Style in Pompeii: Painting and Architecture* (Rome 1985), 38, 172–5; Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 219 n.69; 356–7 ns.2, 4; PPM V, 80–5; Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 175–99. See also the report of A. Hoffmann, in V. Kockel, *AA* 1986, 493–5.

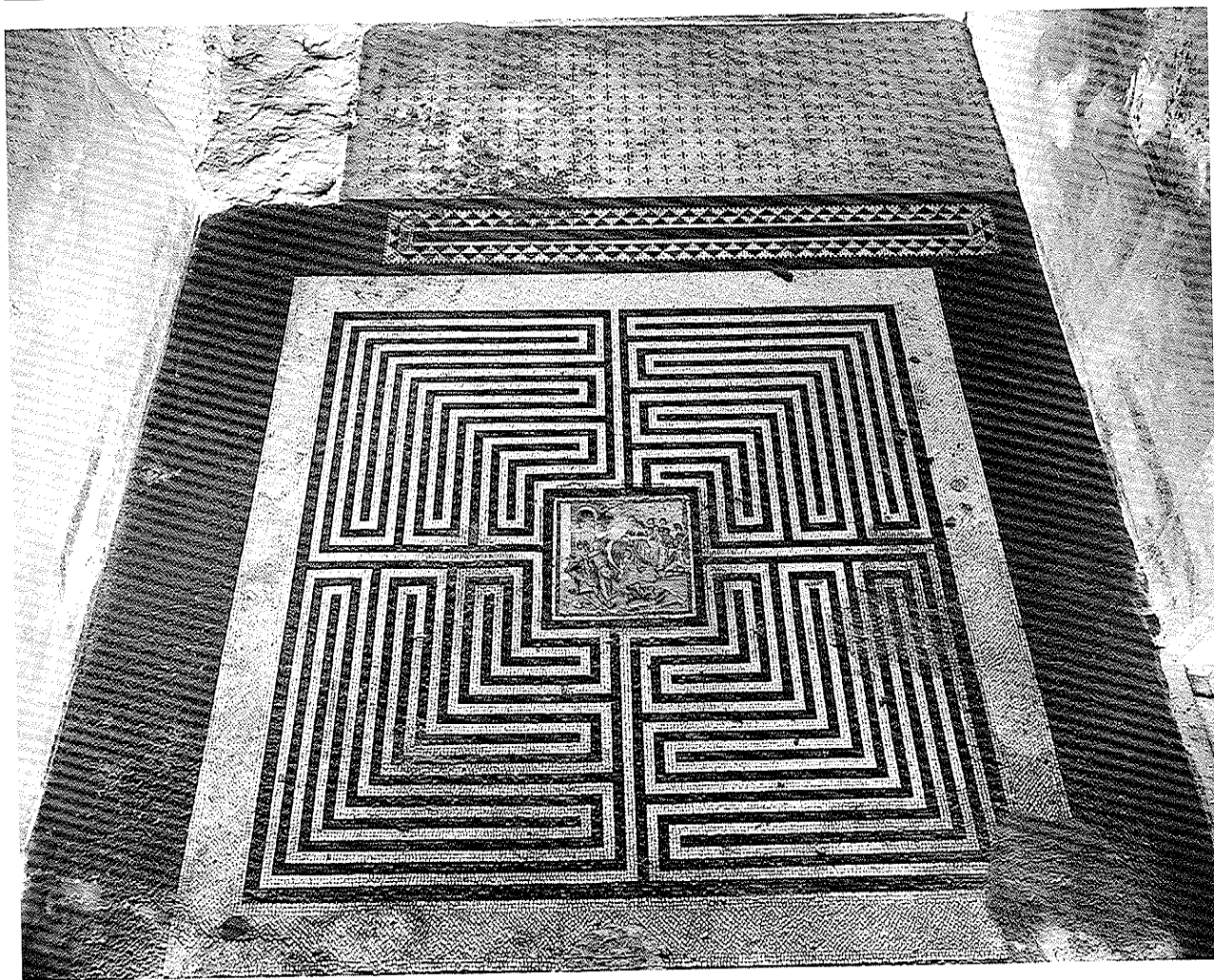
⁷ Dioskourides of Samos: below, n.27. House of the Faun: Pernice 149–51, 176–7; de Vos, *ibid.*, 46–7 (with an attempt, which I find unconvincing, to see symbolic links between the themes of the decoration). Skull mosaic: O. Brendel, 'Untersuchungen zur Allegorie des pompejanischen Totenkopf-mosaiks', *RömMitt* 49, 1934, 157–79; K. Dunbabin, 'Sic erimus cuncti... The skeleton in Graeco-Roman art', *Jdl* 101, 1986, 213–14; *Collezione Napoli*, 116–19 nos.4, 27.

⁸ See below, ch.16, n.14. The marble trays in which they are laid make an origin in the Greek world more likely; in contrast many other *emblemata* are laid in trays of travertine, which indicate Italian manufacture (cf. Stroocka, *CdelLab* 100).

⁹ W. Leonhard, 'Mosaikstudien zur Casa del Fauno in Pompeii', *Neapolis* 2, 1914, 42–99; de Vos, 'Paving techniques' (cit.n.5), 46–7; Daszewski 19–22, with refs; see below, n.23.

¹⁰ Four variants of the scene of Theseus and the Minotaur have been found in Pompeii and other towns of Campania: Pernice 175–6; W.A. Daszewski, *La Mosaïque de Thésée, Nea Paphos* 11 (Warsaw 1977), 49–50; de Vos, *ibid.*, 44–5; *Collezione Napoli*, 118–19 nos.29–31; below, ch.18, n.45. Cf. also below, n.30, on the fish mosaics.

¹¹ De Vos, *ibid.*, 45, cites two small *emblemata* with masks, found in a *taberna* in the House of Ganymede (VII 13,23), along with numerous bronze objects (H. Eschebach, *RömMitt* 89, 1982, 252, pl.110).



40 Pompeii VI 11,10, House of the Labyrinth, *cubiculum* 42, *emblema* with Theseus and Minotaur *in situ*. 2.06 m × 2.06 m; *emblema* 39.2 cm × 39.5 cm. c.70–60 BC.

in the House of the Labyrinth (VI 11,10): the *emblema* of Theseus killing the Minotaur is appropriately framed by a black-and-white labyrinth pattern¹² (figure 40). On some later floors the *emblema* is set into a more ornately patterned surround; it is often impossible to tell whether these *emblemata* are contemporary with their setting, or are older works reused.

The *emblemata* are usually between half a metre and one metre square, occasionally less; and even the fine mosaics apparently laid on the spot are seldom much larger. The laboriousness of the *vermiculatum* technique inevitably imposed its own restrictions upon the scale of

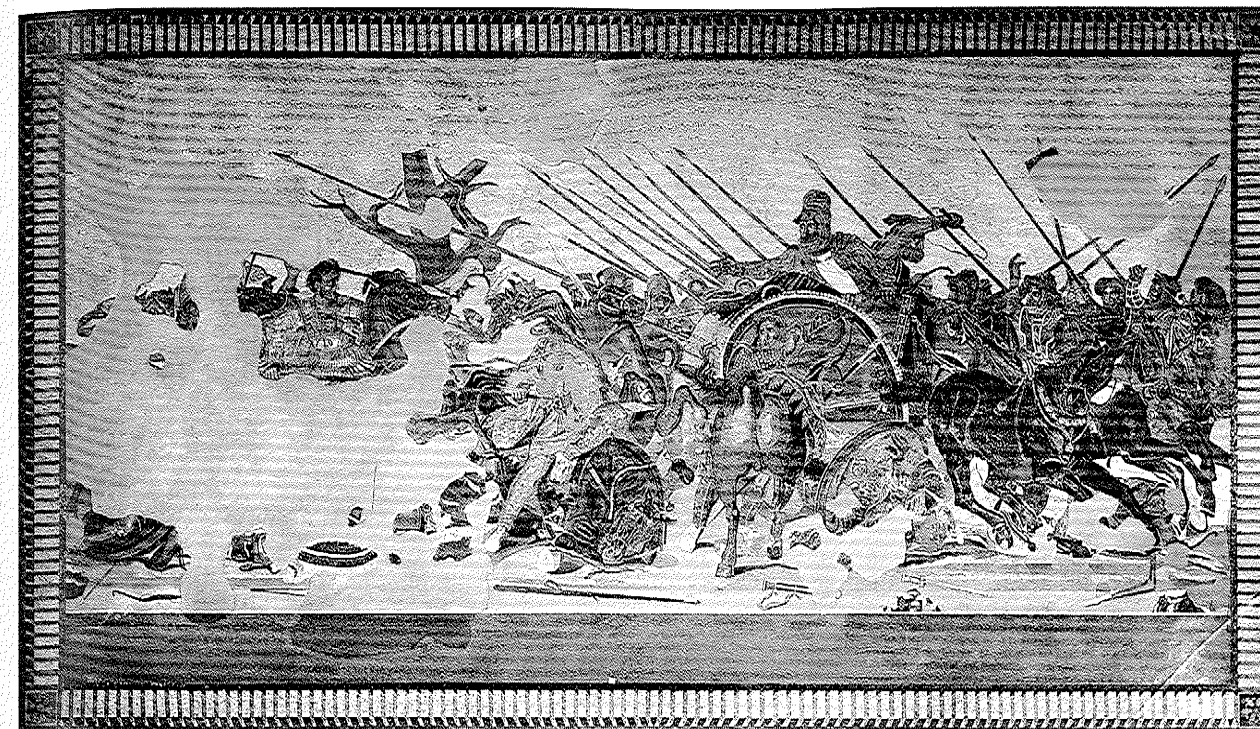
the work. There exist, however, exceptional works which demonstrate the capacity of the craftsmen to adapt their miniaturist technique to a monumental scale. The outstanding example is probably the best known mosaic to have survived from antiquity, the Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun¹³ (figures 41, 42; plate 6). The figured scene, set in a border of dentils in perspective, measures 5.12 m × 2.71 m; it occupied most of the floor of its room, an *exedra* opening off the first peristyle of the house. The First Style paintings in the *exedra*, and other indications, allow the laying of the mosaic to be dated shortly before 100 BC.¹⁴ Across the entrance, between the

Faces of Power. Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford 1993), 130–50.

¹⁴ Pernice 93–4, 130; Laidlaw, *First Style* (cit.n.6), 38, 174, 192; Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 360 n.10; Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 176, 235 ns.4,5; see above, n.6.

¹² Strocka, *Cdellab* 99–100, 105–7, figs.269–73, dated 70–60 BC.

¹³ Extensive bibliography in Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 205 n.1; esp. H. Fuhrmann, *Philoxenos von Eretria* (Göttingen 1931), 93–227; A. Rumpf, 'Zum Alexander-Mosaik', *AthMitt* 77, 1962, 229–41; Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder* (cit.n.3), 122–69; B. Andreae, *Das Alexandermosaik aus Pompeji* (Recklinghausen 1977); A. Stewart,



41 Pompeii VI 12,2, House of the Faun, Alexander Mosaic. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 5.82 m × 3.13 m including border. End of the second century BC.

columns, ran a frieze with Nilotic flora and fauna; the taste for exotic Egyptian subjects is characteristic of Italy in the late Republic.¹⁵ The main mosaic shows the decisive battle between Alexander the Great and Darius King of Persia: either the Battle of the Issos (333 BC) or the final battle at Gaugamela (331 BC). It is universally acknowledged that it must be a very close copy of a painting made shortly after the actual event; only so can the accurate representation of details such as the costume and equipment of the Persians be explained. Attempts have been made to identify the artist of the original painting; the most plausible candidate is Philoxenos of Eretria, whom Pliny mentions as painting 'a battle of Alexander with Darius, a picture second to none' for Cassander, king of Macedon, in the closing decades of the fourth century, perhaps c.316 BC.¹⁶ That it was a famous painting is shown by the existence of derivatives of the central group in other media, antedating the mosaic; only the mosaic, however, can be seen as a faithful copy.¹⁷ It illustrates better than almost any other surviving work the achievements of Greek

painting in the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods; only the paintings from the Macedonian tombs at Vergina can be compared in quality, and even they fall short of its narrative complexity and significance of content.¹⁸

Great technical virtuosity is displayed in the densely crowded composition which conveys the tumult of battle; the command of foreshortening is demonstrated by the rear view of the horse in the foreground, the mastery of movement in the four horses of the chariot, barely under the control of their driver. But it is also a work of psychological complexity, with a sense for the critical turning-point in great events that conforms to Aristotelian theory of tragedy. Alexander at the head of his Macedonians, in the damaged area at the left, has outflanked the Persian army, and rushed without warning upon the very chariot of the King. Just before he can reach Darius himself, a Persian nobleman, richly dressed in typical Persian costume, has hurled his horse between the two, and taken the full thrust of Alexander's long lance right through the body; man and beast both collapse in their death agony in

¹⁵ Pernice 167–8, pl.68,1–4, who thinks it is a later addition to the room; see also Donderer, 'Das pompejanisches Alexandermosaik' (below, n.23); Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 81, 337 n.9. For the subject, cf. J. Lancha, 'Deux fragments d'une frise nilotique inédite au Musée de Naples', *MEFRA* 92,1, 1980, 263–76.

¹⁶ Plin. *H.N.* 35.110. See Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder* (cit.n.3), 159–62, 170–1, who thinks the identification with Philoxenos probable, but not provable, and rules out the other two candidates some-

times suggested, Aristeides of Thebes (Plin. *H.N.* 35.99) and the Egyptian Helena, known only from an unreliable source; Stewart, *Faces of Power* (cit.n.13), 147–50; Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 138–42.

¹⁷ Cf. Hölscher, *ibid.*, 122–3; L. Giuliani, 'Alexander in Ruvo, Eretria und Sidon', *AntK* 20, 1977, 26–42; but also Stewart, *ibid.*, 150–7; and on the whole question Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 51–82.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Andronikos, *Vergina. The Royal Tombs and the Ancient City* (Athens 1984), 86–119.



42 Pompeii VI 12,2, House of the Faun, Alexander Mosaic, detail of Alexander.

the centre. The delay to Alexander's charge caused by this self-sacrifice gives Darius' driver time to wheel the chariot around at the gallop and carry the King off to safety, at such speed that members of his own army are crushed beneath the horses' hooves and the great wheels of the chariot. Darius himself takes no heed of the chariot's flight, but stares with horror at Alexander's attack and his kinsman's sacrifice; the bow in his hand and empty quiver hanging on the chariot show that he is helpless to defend himself. The Persian bodyguard hurries up to help the King, but the long lances in the background, which play so effective a role in the composition, are most probably

to be interpreted as *sarissai*, the typical long lances of the Macedonian army, outflanking the Persians on this side too: a sign that the battle is decisively lost for the Persians.¹⁹ Despite the narrative density, the emphasis is firmly on the confrontation between the two great protagonists: the one dignified at the moment of defeat, the other intent on victory, but denied at the last moment the crowning accomplishment, the direct hand-to-hand encounter with his opponent.

All this, of course, is the work of the original painter. But the achievement of the mosaicists in producing a copy which conveys the quality of the original is scarcely less impressive. The mosaic is made of tesserae of the finest *vermiculatum* in the figures, only slightly larger in the background; calculations, evidently approximate, have given a total as high as four million. All are of natural stone, almost entirely in the four main colours red, yellow, black, and white, but with an almost unlimited range of

tones within these. This echoes the famous 'four-colour scheme' used by many Greek painters of the Classical and early Hellenistic period, and must go back to the original painting.²⁰ The mosaic was damaged in antiquity and repaired in several places, some patched with tesserae coarse or fine, some simply filled in with plaster; the latter are ascribed to damage caused by the earthquake of AD 62. There are also certain areas where the mosaic is less than perfectly clear, and others where there appear to be mistakes. Thus the foreshortened horse in the foreground has only three legs, and among the legs of the horses of the chariot appears a curious ghostly leg and hoof striped like a zebra. Other unrelated bits of figures and weapons appear in a confused section in the centre, in the background behind the main figures. Various arguments have been based on these features.²¹ The errors and confused areas have been used to argue that the mosaic must have been composed in sections by the reverse method, and the pieces then assembled on the spot, when it was too late to correct any mistakes.²² This is highly unlikely; the reverse method involves the careful preparation of the work face down on a full-sized cartoon, and mistakes are much less likely to occur with this method than with work carried out freehand on the spot. The mistakes are rather to be attributed to the mosaicists' problems in following the original, perhaps because it used painterly atmospheric and light effects difficult to reproduce in mosaic. The patching has been seen as a sign that the mosaic was imported to Pompeii from some other part of the Hellenistic world, and that one set of patches were repairs to damage incurred in transport. This has usually been dismissed on the grounds that the materials used appear to correspond to other stones used in the mosaics of the House of the Faun, some of which have been identified as local stone from Vesuvius, and that over a span of two hundred years the mosaic may well have suffered from considerable wear and tear, and needed to be repaired on various occasions. Recently the argument for importation

has been restated by Michael Donderer, who points out that none of the securely identified local stones come from the mosaic itself, and that some of the repairs seem more consistent with damage caused in transit. He suggests that it may have been brought in sections from somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, perhaps a Hellenistic palace.²³ In my opinion this theory remains unlikely in view of the size and fragility of the work and the difficulty that would be involved in dividing it into sections; its conformity to the dimensions of the room also indicates that the mosaic was laid on the spot by a team of craftsmen, who may safely be taken to have been Greek. Everything else is uncertain: where the mosaicists came from; how they organised their work; where the original painting was to be seen; and what form of intermediate cartoon they used to guide their work on the spot. The presence of the mosaic in Pompeii testifies, not only to the wealth of the owners of the House of the Faun and their claims to Greek culture, but more specifically to a desire on the part of the members of this Italian upper class to portray themselves as the heirs and equals of Hellenistic rulers. In the same way a few decades later, the owner of the villa at Boscoreale had a room painted with copies or adaptations of scenes from one of the great Hellenistic courts.²⁴

Of the other mosaics in the House of the Faun, the most remarkable is the so-called Tiger-rider²⁵ (figure 43). It occupied the centre of what was probably a *triclinium* (Room 34); the remains of First Style painting covering the edges of the mosaic show that it was laid, like the Alexander mosaic, around 100 BC. A floor of coarser tesserae surrounded the central panel, whose frame, a beribboned garland set with masks, is executed in a technique as fine as the figured panel, with tesserae of two or three millimetres. In the panel, a winged boy rides a creature striped like a tiger, but with a lion's mane; he holds a large drinking-cup, a *skyphos*, in one arm. Wreaths of ivy and vine worn by rider and beast, and the thyrsus lying on the rocky ground, establish the Dionysiac character of the

¹⁹ Cf. Rumpf, 'Zum Alexander-Mosaik' (cit.n.13). For a different interpretation, cf. C. Nylander, 'The standard of the Great King: a problem in the Alexander mosaic', *OpRom* 14, 1983, 19–37, countered by T. Hölscher, 'Zur Deutung des Alexandermosaiks' in *Akurgal'a Armanan. Festschrift Akurgal* (Anadolu 22, 1981/83 (1989)), 297–307; Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 124–5.

²⁰ Cf. Plin. *H.N.* 35.50; Cic. *Brutus* 18.70; V. Bruno, *Form and Color in Greek Painting* (New York 1977), 53–66, 75–7. Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic* 167–9, points out the very occasional use of green for some details, insufficient to affect the general 'four-colour' character.

²¹ For the technical problems, cf. Fuhrmann, *Philoxenos* (cit.n.13), 93–126, and the petrographic analysis of the stones, 277–8; Pernice, 93–4; Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder* (cit.n.3), 123–7; Andrae, *Das Alexandermosaik* (cit.n.13), 9–14.

²² A. Ippel, 'Mosaikstudien', *RömMitt* 45, 1930, 80–98; for the method, see below, ch.17, ns.43, 45.

²³ M. Donderer, 'Das pompejanische Alexandermosaik – Ein östliches Importstück?', in *Das antike Rom und den Osten. Festschrift für Klaus Parlasca zum 65. Geburtstag* (Erlangen 1990), 19–31. This theory entails that the date c.100 BC would no longer be valid for the original laying of the mosaic: Donderer suggests the first half of the second century. Against this, see Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 360 n.10.

²⁴ Cf. R.R.R. Smith, 'Spear-won land at Boscoreale: on the royal paintings of a Roman villa', *JRA* 7, 1994, 100–28, with earlier refs.

²⁵ Blake 1930, 137–8; Pernice 130, 158–9, pl.59; Leonhard, 'Mosaikstudien' (cit.n.9), 62–96; *Collezione Napoli*, col.pl.32, 116–17 no.7.



43 Pompeii vi 12,2, House of the Faun, Tiger-rider. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 1.63 m × 1.63 m. End of the second century BC.

scene. The theme is reminiscent of the rather older winged tiger-rider in the House of Dionysus at Delos, and in both cases the exact significance is uncertain: Pernice suggests that here it represents the power of Eros and wine to master the savage beast.²⁶ The background is

²⁶ Pernice 159; for the Delos mosaic, see above, ch.2, n.41.

²⁷ M. Bieber, G. Rodenwaldt, 'Die Mosaiken des Dioskurides von Samos', *Jdl* 26, 1911, 1–22; Blake 1930, 141–2; Pernice 169–71, pls.70, 71; *Collezioni Napoli*, col.pl.p.29, 116–17 nos.1–2.

black, as in many of the eastern Hellenistic mosaics; the figures are strongly modelled, with dramatic chiaroscuro and a wide range of tones.

Among the finest technically of all the mosaics in *vermiculatum* from Pompeii are the two scenes from comedy signed by Dioskourides of Samos from the so-called Villa of Cicero.²⁷ One shows three women at table, an old hag holding a cup and two younger ones, with a small slave at one side (figure 44); the other has two male musicians



44 Pompeii, 'Villa of Cicero', Women at Breakfast (from *Synaristosai* of Menander) by Dioskourides of Samos. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 0.35 m × 0.42 m. c.100 BC.



45 Pompeii, 'Villa of Cicero', scene from *Theophoroumene* of Menander by Dioskourides of Samos. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 0.41 m × 0.43 m. c.100 BC.

playing tambourine and cymbals, a female flute-player, and again a small attendant (figure 45). The masks worn by all the main figures characterise the scenes as dramatic. Their precise identification is based on the representation of almost identical scenes over three centuries later (prob-

²⁸ Charitonidis et al., *Maison du Ménandre* 41–4, 46–9, 97–105, pls.5–6; cf. below, ch.12, ns.26–8.

ably in the late third century AD) on the mosaics of the House of Menander at Mytilene, where inscriptions identify them as illustrations of the comedies of Menander, most famous of the writers of Attic New Comedy in the second half of the fourth century BC.²⁸ A scene almost identical to the Dioskourides mosaic with the women, though in reverse and in a much cruder style, comes from Menander's *Synaristosai*, or 'Women at breakfast'. A scene

identified as from his *Theophoroumene* ('The possessed girl') resembles the Dioskourides panel with the musicians, though it does not correspond exactly. It is disputed whether the source of the iconography was an illustrated manuscript of Menander or a work in some other medium such as painting; the latter is more likely in my view, but the means by which it was transmitted is obscure.²⁹ In any event the Pompeii mosaics offer further proof of the taste for Greek culture shown by the wealthy of that city around 100 BC.

The panels are true *emblemata*, contained in marble frames, and measure less than half a metre on each side. The tesserae are nowhere larger than 0.25 cm; in many parts of the figures they are under 1 mm square. As with many of the best Hellenistic mosaics, the mortar is tinted to match the tesserae; Pernice observes that here this was done, not before the tesserae were set but after, with a very fine brush. The result, once again, is a 'painting in stone' of astonishing subtlety, where the finest of details can be indicated. The colouristic treatment is especially remarkable in the drapery. In the scene of the 'Women at breakfast', the dominant tones are yellow and grey-pink, but every nuance of these is used to indicate the folds and shadows of the thin fabrics. In the panel with the musicians, brighter colours are used, especially a turquoise-blue in the tunics of the men and the flute-player; the colours change within the same garment to produce a shimmering effect of light. The background in both scenes is simple, mainly neutral bands against which the figures stand out; just enough is indicated to convey the effect of an interior setting for the women, and a street with a house-door behind the musicians.

Four mosaics from Pompeii represent scenes of marine life: the two best come from the House of the Faun and House VIII 2,16³⁰ (plate 7; figure 46). Various species of fish and sea creatures surround a central group showing the fight between an octopus and a lobster. The creatures are very carefully observed, with individual species clearly recognisable; the patterning of the scales, the structure of the fins, are rendered in great detail in innumerable shades of grey, offset by pinks, red, and yellow. They swim freely, with lively naturalistic movement, in House VIII

2,16 against a plain black background. In the House of the Faun the background is divided into a darker section below and a lighter above, presumably meant to suggest the changing colour of the sea's surface. Rocky outcrops at the side, with a tiny fishing bird perched on them, imply a wider landscape setting. A detailed study of these fish mosaics has led Meyboom to the conclusion that a single prototype lies behind them, representing the fish in a rocky bay, and that a single workshop was responsible for their execution; he traces the activity of this workshop from the end of the second century BC through the first half of the first. Some of his conclusions may be overschematic, since the same models may have circulated among different workshops; but the general picture he presents of the relationship among the fish mosaics may be accepted. They illustrate the interest of the Hellenistic artists in precise zoographical observation; their popularity also attests to the taste for live exotic fish fashionable in the fish-ponds of late Republican nobles, echoed at least in image by the Pompeian house-owners.

Many of the other fine Pompeian mosaics show a similar interest in the naturalistic rendering of animals and birds. Among the scenes of birds is a version of the Doves of Sosos, in a rich garland-and-mask border, from House VIII 2,34; while the animals include a lion mauling a panther from the same house, and a cat catching a quail, together with ducks and a still-life of fish, from the House of the Faun.³¹ The range of scenes with human actors is limited. Mythological scenes are rare, but include those of Theseus and the Minotaur mentioned above; a few Nilotic scenes show pygmies or grotesque dwarfs in boats.³² The theatre inspired, in addition to Dioskourides' mosaics, an *emblema* from the House of the Tragic Poet (VI 8,5) showing the preparations for a satyr play. The director, or *choregus*, sits in the centre giving instructions to two actors wearing the shaggy loincloths that characterise them as satyrs; one has his mask on the top of his head. A musician plays the double flute in front of them, while an actor to the right is helped into a Silenus costume; masks lie beside him and at the feet of the *choregus*. The scene has an architectural setting, with columns supporting a coffered roof; the pillars at the side extend

²⁹ See ch.18, n.51.

³⁰ Blake 1930, 138–9, pl.50; Pernice 149–54, pls.52–6; P. Meyboom, 'I mosaici pompeiani con figure di pesci', *MededRome* 39, 1977, 49–93, pls.46–58; Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 173–6; *Collezioni Napoli*, col.pl.p.33, 116–17 nos.8, 13.

³¹ Blake 1930, 129–31, 135–7; Pernice 155–6, 161–7, pls.62–4; *Collezioni*

Napoli, col.pl.p.31, 116–19, nos.6, 16, 17. Doves of Sosos: above, ch.2, n.29.

³² Theseus: above, n.10. Nilotic: House of the Menander (I 10,4), Pernice 59, pl.23,6; House of Paquius Proculus (I 7,1), Pernice 96, pl.41,1.



46 Pompeii VIII 2,16, Marine scene. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 0.88 m × 0.88 m. c.100 BC.

down to the bottom frame, spoiling the perspective. The *emblema* was laid in the *tablinum* in the centre of a black-and-white meander, typical, like the rest of the decoration of the house, of the mid-first century AD. Whether the *emblema* itself dates from this period, or is an older work reused, is disputed.³³

³³ Blake 1930, 105, 144, pl.30,1, thinks the *emblema* is contemporary with the Fourth Style paintings in the house; Pernice 98, 171, calls it a late free copy of a Greek original. Others think it is a work of the first century BC reused; E. La Rocca, M. & A. de Vos, *Guida archeologica di Pompei* (Verona 1976), 325; Stročka, *CdelLab* 100 n.305. *Collezioni Napoli*, col.pl.p.28, 120–1 no.42.

A unique use of the medium occurs in a small *emblema* from House VI 15,14 with the portrait bust of a woman (plate 8). We have few surviving examples of painted portraits from Roman Italy, though there can be no doubt that they were common; the mosaic evidently sets itself to transmit such a painting in permanent form. The rendering of the fine nuances of the flesh tones, which from a distance melt into one another, and of the transparent veil over the shoulders, pushes the mosaic technique to its limits in the imitation of painting. It is noteworthy that this mosaic does not set itself to reproduce a Greek prototype, but apparently represents a contemporary individ-

ual. The woman is evidently a wealthy member of the *haute bourgeoisie* of the town; her hairstyle with its conspicuous central parting is a simpler version of those fashionable in the late Augustan and Tiberian periods. The setting in which the mosaic was found, at the centre of a pavement of *opus sectile*, is not original; it might have been designed originally to be set in a wall.³⁴

The taste for hellenising picture mosaics was not of course confined to Campania. Little of quality survives from late Republican Rome, but the neighbouring towns and country villas of Latium have produced works that presumably reflect the fashions of the capital. For instance, at Privernum, south of Rome, two houses of the late Republican period with lavish decoration have been excavated: one contained a garland-framed *emblema* with complex figured scenes, the other a frieze with a Nilotic subject.³⁵

Outstanding both in size and quality is the Nile Mosaic from Praeneste (Palestrina), also known as the Barberini mosaic (figure 47); its precise character, and especially its date, have provoked extensive scholarly controversy.³⁶ It comes from a complex of structures behind the forum at Praeneste; above and behind this rise the terraces of the great Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia. The Nile Mosaic occupied the grotto-like apse of a hall at one end of this lower complex. At the opposite end was another grotto hollowed out of the rock; this was traditionally identified as the 'Antro delle Sorti', the cave where the oracular lots of Fortuna were drawn, but is rather to be seen as a *nymphaeum*, or decorative grotto. It too was paved with a mosaic, over which water was designed to flow, and which showed fish swimming against a changing green-black sea, framed in the foreground by a rocky landscape with a little sanctuary at one side.³⁷ It is very closely related to the Pompeian fish mosaics, though more ambitious in scope, and is probably derived from the same model. It is likely to be contemporary with the construction of the lower

complex below the sanctuary, which used to be associated with Sulla, c.80 BC, but is now placed in the second half, probably the last quarter, of the second century BC. While the Fish mosaic has remained *in situ*, though badly damaged in the centre, the Nile Mosaic was removed from its setting in the seventeenth century, and has suffered greatly from its subsequent vicissitudes. Its present shape is the work of restorers, and studies of the tesserae and their setting from the back have shown that only about half the work can be considered original; but the restoration was based on earlier drawings, which guarantee the iconography, if not the style, of most of the restored details.³⁸

It illustrates a vast panoramic landscape, which presents a bird's-eye view of the River Nile, from its fabulous origins in the heartland of Africa past the more familiar sights of Upper and Lower Egypt to the Delta. In the upper part a mountainous landscape is populated by Ethiopians hunting, and by a variety of exotic animals, most identified by their names in Greek (figure 48). They include recognisable creatures, such as giraffe (*kamelopardalis*) and rhinoceros, and some more obscure or fabulous ones such as *krokodilopardalis* and *onokentaura* (the latter a female, human-headed ass). In the lower half, the water spreads out widely to suggest the Nile at the time of its annual flood, celebrated in Egypt with great festivities. Islands above the surface of the water support various buildings, among them a typical Egyptian temple, its entrance flanked by pylons, and a temple in Greek style, with white-robed priests, obelisks, and a round well probably meant for a Nilometer (figure 49). Smaller buildings include the reed huts of peasants, a dovecot, and a round structure whose roof is covered with black-and-white ibises. The water between is full of boats: the small curved boats of the peasants made of bundles of papyrus, and larger merchant-ships, while a hunting party in a more luxurious vessel attacks a group of crocodiles and hippo-

³⁴ Pernice 88, 178–9, pl.78; M. Donderer, 'Ein verschollenes römisches Mosaik und die Gattung der Wandemblemata', in *Hommages Stern*, 127, pl.LXXXI; *Collezioni Napoli*, col.pl.p.37, 120–1 no.40. For the hairstyle cf. L. Furnée-van Zwet, 'Fashion in women's hair-dress in the first century of the Roman Empire', *BABesch* 31, 1956, 16–21.

³⁵ *Emblema*: W. von Sydow, *AA* 1976, 371, fig.30; M.R. Sanzi Di Mino, 'Pavimentazioni a Roma e nel Lazio', in *Roma Repubblicana dal 270 A.C. all'età Augustea* (Rome 1987), 60, fig.14; M. Cancellieri, 'Privernum: i mosaici della domus dell'emblema figurato. Dati vecchi e nuovi', *Atti III Colloquio AISCOM* (1996), 619–42. Nilotic scene: R. Righi, *ArchLaz* 6, 1984, 178–87, fig.6.

³⁶ Detailed recent discussion: Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic*, with full earlier refs. See also G. Gullini, *I Mosaici di Palestrina* (Rome 1956); A.

Steinmeyer-Scharika, *Das Nilmosaik von Palestrina und eine Ptolemäische Expedition nach Äthiopien* (Bonn 1978). In its present form it measures 5.85 m × 4.31 m.

³⁷ Gullini, *ibid.*, 20–32, pls.11, VIII–XII; Meyboom, 'I mosaici pompeiani' (cit.n.30), 57–74, 76–7; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 227–56. For the topography of the lower complex, see H. Riemann, 'Zum Forumstempel und zum unteren Heiligtum der Fortuna Primigenia zu Praeneste', *RömMitt* 93, 1986, 357–404; M. Krumme, 'Isis in Praeneste. Zur Rekonstruktion des unteren Heiligtums', *Jdl* 105, 1990, 155–65; Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 8–16, with references 202–17.

³⁸ For a proposed reconstruction of the original, in a slightly different arrangement from their current state, see Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 3–7, fig.8.



47 Praeneste, Nile Mosaic. Museo Nazionale Prenestino, Palestrina. Present form 5.85 m × 4.31 m. Last quarter of the second century BC.

potamus. These creatures are not named, unlike the animals in the top half. Finally two scenes at the bottom show an open-air drinking party beside the water under a pergola, suggesting the luxurious life of the Delta, and a temple in its enclosure among trees.³⁹ In front of the temple, under an awning, a group of soldiers assembles, while to one side a procession of priests approaches through a kiosk, carrying a sacred object.

Style and technique of the mosaic can of course only be judged on the basis of the original sections. The tesserae are all of natural stone, very small in the figures, slightly larger in the ground. The water, which unites the separate scenes, is marked by horizontal striations of several shades of grey-blue, white, and occasionally thin lines of black; ripples and reflections break its surface, and the

³⁹ The scene with the drinking party is a restoration; the original fragment is in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin: see I. Krieseleit, *Antike Mosaiken* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin 1985), 38–40, no. 11.

effect, in the unrestored sections, is extraordinarily fluid and varied. Some plant forms, such as the lotus blossoms which appear above the water, are carefully observed, but others are indicated in a sketchy fashion by stripes of light and shade or flecks of colour. A similar sketchy technique is used for the human figures, who are rendered without clear detail, sometimes as little more than silhouettes. This reaches its most extreme form with the warship in the lower right corner: the warriors' heads and spears are just dark shadows, while light picks out their shields, and the oars are alternate streaks of light and dark pink. Once again mosaic is imitating a technique peculiar to painting; this time it is the style sometimes called ancient impressionism, where form dissolves into contrasts of light and shade.⁴⁰ In its original setting, water seeping through the

⁴⁰ Cf. R. Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge 1991), 142–9: a good example is the yellow frieze from the House of Livia in Rome (c.30 BC), though the unreal yellow background gives it a different character.

rock would have covered the surface, enhancing the effect of fluidity.

The lower part of the mosaic shows a familiarity with Egypt and Egyptian life quite different from the generic Nilotic scenes common in Roman art; either the designer of the mosaic had first-hand knowledge of Egypt, or it must be an accurate copy of an Egyptian model. The upper half has been associated with accounts of an expedition towards the sources of the Nile under Ptolemy II Philadelphus, about 280 BC; this brought back the knowledge of many exotic beasts, whose appearance must have been handed down in illustrated treatises. But the direct prototype of the mosaic as a whole cannot have been an illustrated roll, for this could have contained only isolated details, and not the landscape which ties them all into one; a painted prototype is likely.⁴¹ For the mosaic dates have been suggested ranging from the second quarter of the second century BC to the early third AD, a wider span than for any other mosaic; the most common suggestions have been the time of Sulla or that of Hadrian. The basis for these proposals has frequently been very tenuous: the unique character of the work makes comparisons impossible. However the Fish mosaic, as has been seen, is probably contemporary with the construction of the lower complex in the last quarter of the second century BC. The Nile Mosaic shares many characteristics of technique and materials with the Fish mosaic; it seems likely that it belongs in the same period of construction.⁴² It may therefore be seen, like the mosaics from the House of the Faun, as an example of the Hellenistic tradition of picture mosaics at its height, brought to Italy by Greek craftsmen, in this instance certainly from Alexandria, and directly inspired by painted originals. The presence of a work of this nature in Praeneste is enigmatic; it has been suggested that the building was a temple of Isis, whose cult was beginning to spread in Italy at this time, and who was associated (in her form as Isis-Tyche) with Fortuna. Even if the building did not have a ritual function, the association with Isis is surely correct. The vision of Egypt under the life-giving floodwaters of the Nile, on a mosaic which could itself be covered with a veil of real water, evokes the goddess' protection and the prosperity that she brings.⁴³

⁴¹ Cf. Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* ch.vii, on the presumed archetypes as separate paintings in Alexandria, probably from the second half of the third century. For the expeditions of Ptolemy Philadelphus, see Steinmeyer-Schareika, *Das Nilmosaik* (cit.n.36), 52–97. See also F. Coarelli, 'La *pompè* di Tolomeo Filadelfo e il mosaico nilotico di Palestrina', *Ktéma* 15, 1990, 225–51, who associates the original paint-



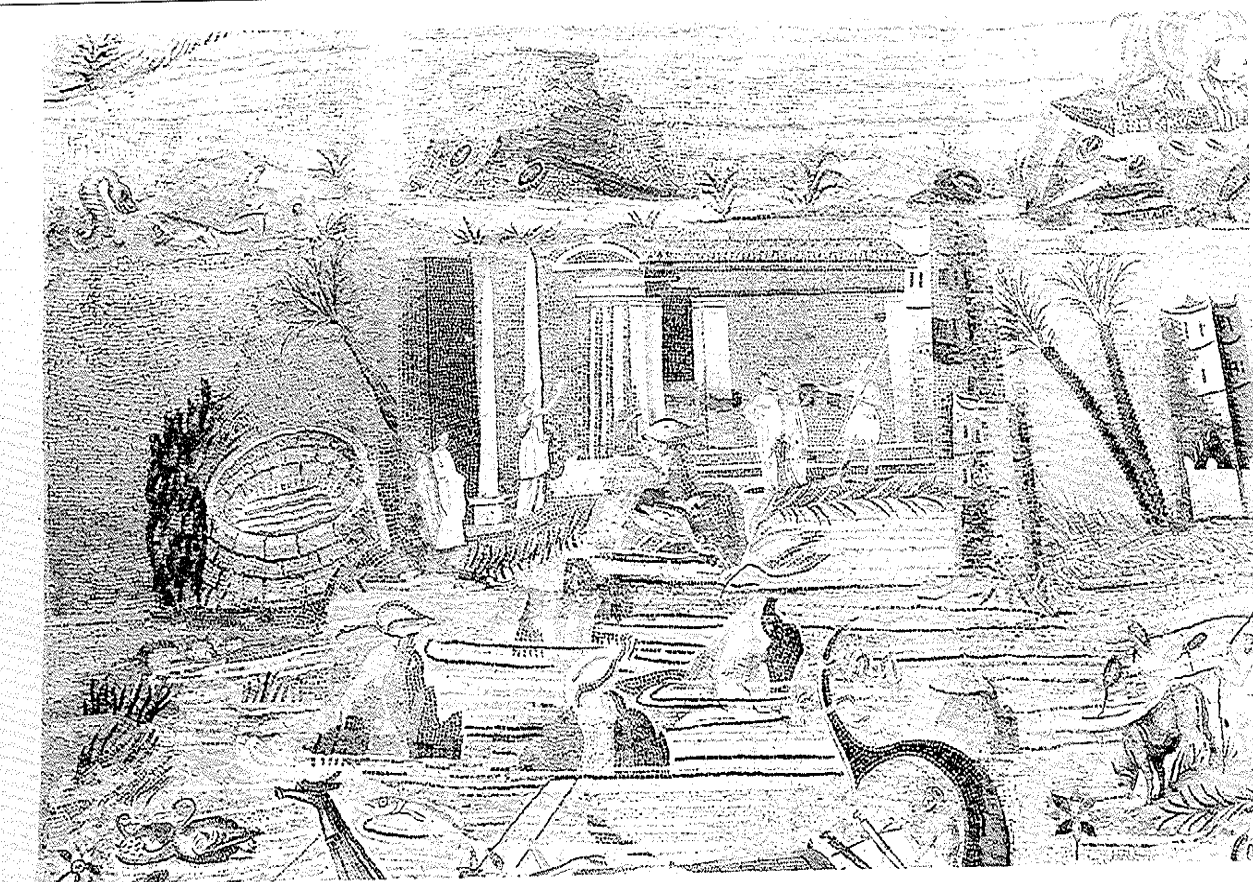
48 Praeneste, Nile Mosaic, detail of upper section showing Nile landscape and fauna.

The great period of the picture mosaic in Italy may be placed between the late second and the mid-first century BC. Its popularity shows a correlation with the styles of wall painting in fashion at the time: the abstract architectural structures of the First Style of Pompeian painting and the comparatively austere architectural paintings of the early Second Style offered virtually no space for figured decoration, which accordingly found a place on the floor. As figured panels came increasingly into favour in the paintings of the later Second and subsequent Styles, so their use on the floor declined. The correlation should not be pushed too far: *emblemata* were certainly reused in

ing with the Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus of 280–79 BC.

⁴² Review of the proposed datings in Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 16–19, 217–18 n.58; he concludes for a date c.120–110 BC.

⁴³ Cf. Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* chs.iv, v.



49 Praeneste, Nile Mosaic, detail of central section showing inundation of Nile and Egyptian temple with Nilometer.

later settings, despite the presence of lavish figured ornament on the walls. They also continued to be made under the empire, though our evidence is insufficient to determine whether there was real continuity or occasional conscious revivals; very seldom is it possible to date individual examples securely. But with the possible exception of the *emblemata* from Hadrian's Villa at Tibur, if these are indeed to be dated to Hadrian's reign, no later works in Italy achieved the full mastery of the *vermiculatum* technique which alone permitted the real imitation of painting; this must be seen as an essentially Hellenistic tradition.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See below, ch.4, n.36.

Bibliography

Blake 1930; Pernice; B. Andreae, *Das Alexandermosaik aus Pompeji* (Recklinghausen 1977); Cohen, *Alexander Mosaic*; P. Meyboom, 'I mosaici pompeiani con figure di pesci', *MededRome* 39, 1977, 49–93; *Collezioni Napoli* 28–37, 116–21 (for illustrations); Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic*.

Mosaics in Italy: Republican and Imperial

IN LATE Republican Italy two categories of mosaic can be clearly distinguished. On the one hand are the fine pictorial mosaics of Hellenistic tradition discussed in the last chapter, on the other there are coarser types of paving used to surround an *emblemata*, or to cover a floor with simple ornamental designs. In the course of the development studied in this chapter the distinction disappeared. *Emblemata* were used seldom, while there was a great expansion both in the use of tessellated mosaic and in the methods of decoration. In Italy of the Empire there was a range of possibilities running from purely two-dimensional designs in black-and-white, geometric, vegetal, figured, or combinations of all three, to polychrome floors which might incorporate figure scenes, sometimes very ambitious, but did so in ways which no longer aimed to create an illusion of three-dimensional space. The overall evolution may be seen as moving from the concept of a mosaic as a painting-like picture, distinct from the practical surface of the floor, to that of an overall decorative design, closer to a carpet or tapestry. To some extent this may be seen as a return to the way in which pre-Hellenistic pebble mosaics had been designed, but with infinitely greater variety.

I

The fine picture mosaics were rare luxuries, and even the plainer tessellated mosaic played only a small part in the range of pavements used in Italy down to the end of the Republic.¹ Other types were much more common, and represent a native Italian tradition in contrast to the Hellenistic trend. Foremost among them are the so-called *signina*: floors of mortar mixed with an aggregate, usually

crushed tile or pottery which gives them a reddish hue. Such floors could be purely utilitarian, without decoration; but frequently tesserae (mostly white, occasionally black) are set into the surface, either scattered at random, set in rows, or arranged to form patterns. The type, as was seen in chapter 2, was characteristic of Sicily at least as early as the third century BC, and may have been influenced there by the pavements of Punic Carthage.² Such pavements first appeared in Pompeii during the Limestone Period, before 200 BC, and they are extremely common in the following Tufa Period (c.200–80 BC); at Rome the earliest example probably belongs to the third century BC, and they are most common from the mid-second century onwards. The decorative patterns of tesserae include several that are also used on tessellated mosaics, such as maeander and imbrication. More elaborate designs can form rosettes, floral elements, and occasionally simple figured motifs such as dolphins; inscriptions can also be given in tesserae (figure 50). Similar pavements were made using different sorts of aggregate: in the Campanian cities lava is used, producing a dark grey floor known in Italian as *lavapesta*, in Rome white floors with an aggregate of travertine are common. Pavements of this type never went out of use entirely, but the decorated forms became less popular with the increased use of tessellated mosaic from the first century AD onwards.³

Signina and other mortar pavements were also decorated with larger irregular fragments (*crustae*) of multi-coloured stones, limestone and later marble, set at intervals into the surface. *Crustae* of the same sort were also set into backgrounds composed of tesserae, black, white, or occasionally multi-coloured; in addition to ordinary square tesserae, rectangular ones are frequent,

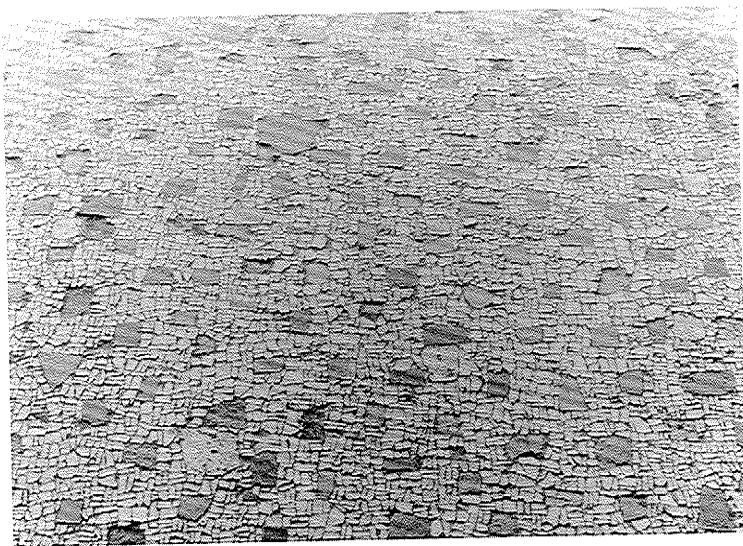
¹ Cf. M. de Vos, 'Paving techniques at Pompeii', *ArchNews* 16, 1991, 36–60 (adapted from de Vos, 'Pavimenti e mosaici', in F. Zevi ed., *Pompei* 79 (Naples 1979), 161–76), for this whole section. She calculates that in Reg. I of Pompeii, out of 630,000 sq.m. surface, 2.5 per cent is of mosaic, and 7 per cent decorated mortar pavements. 75 per cent of the mosaics are found in only three houses, including the only six *emblemata* in this quarter.

² Above, ch.2, ns.10–11; below, ch.7, n.9.

³ Cf. Blake 1930, 23–34; Pernice 119–22; M.L. Morricone Matini, *Pavimenti di signino repubblicani di Roma e dintorni* (MosAnItI, Studi Monografici, Rome 1971). The terminology used for these pavements is varied, including Blake's 'cement pavements', and the Italian terms *battuto*, *cocciopesto*, as well as *lavapesta* for those with an aggregate of lava. I use *signinum* for those with a predominantly ceramic aggregate (with or without surface decoration), 'mortar pavements' for the more general category.



50 Herculaneum, Samnite House, *signinum* pavement in *tablinum*. Late second to early first century BC.



51 Pompeii, Villa of the Mysteries, room 47, *crustae*-pavement. First half of the first century BC.

⁴ M.L. Morricone, *Scutulata pavimenta. I pavimenti con inserti di marmo o di pietra trovati a Roma e nei dintorni*, (Rome 1980); Pernice 55–6 (Villa of the Mysteries), 123–4, 131–2; Blake 1930, 30–1, 50–67. There has been much discussion of the correct name to be given to

usually set in pairs to form a basket-weave pattern. The various types are found in and around Rome in the late second and first centuries BC; elsewhere in Italy they remain common into the first century AD. As examples may be quoted the pavement from the cryptoporticus of the upper sanctuary at Praeneste (Palestrina), probably to be dated to the late second century BC; and many of the pavements from the period of the Second Style in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii⁴ (plate 9; figure 51).

A related type of pavement, which enjoyed a fairly brief period of popularity during the First Style of Pompeian wall-painting, demonstrates even more clearly the liking for the brightly coloured effect produced by a variety of different stones. In this the irregular fragments are not strewn loosely over the surface, but set so closely that very little of the supporting mortar appears between them. Among the richest examples of this technique are the floors of the two *alae* of the House of the Faun (VI 12,2), where in addition to coloured limestones, obsidian and red and green volcanic glass are also used; in the centre of each was set a mosaic *emblema*⁵ (figure 52). Another technique which appeared at the same period is *opus sectile*, which uses stones cut to a specific shape and fitted closely together. This will be studied separately in chapter 15; it may be noted here that examples of it too are to be found in the House of the Faun, especially in the *tablinum* and *impluvium*⁶ (figure 269).

Regular tessellated mosaic made a comparatively late appearance among Italian pavement types, and played at first only a limited role. Pavements of irregular chips, usually white, are found at Pompeii very frequently from the Tufa period on, continuing a tradition attested a century earlier in Sicily; they differ from the contemporary eastern Hellenistic chip-pavement in the much smaller size of the chips, which are usually of limestone, not marble.⁷ The passage from these to regular tesserae is gradual, and many intermediate stages exist. But although regular squared tesserae were used for decoration in *signina* in Pompeian houses of the Tufa Period, and occur

such pavements; Blake's term *lithostroton* is now generally regarded as not applicable, and Morricone's proposal that the term *scutulatum* should be applied to them has not won universal acceptance (cf. M. Donderer, *ArchCl* 34, 1982, 230–4). I shall use the term '*crustae*-pavement'.

⁵ Pernice 122–3, 161–2; Blake 1930, 131–2; for the *emblema* of a cat catching a quail cf. above ch.3, n.31.

⁶ Blake 1930, 35–44; Pernice 90–1, 125–6; below, ch.15, n.5.

⁷ Above, ch.2, n.11; the Italian term *terrazzo* is sometimes applied to these.

as borders for other types of pavement, their use to cover large areas seems to begin only around the turn of the second to first centuries BC. At this time there appear the floors characterised by Pernice as 'quasi-reticulate', with more-or-less regular tesserae often laid in diagonal rows; they are either plain white or have a simple black band as a border.⁸ In the following period they are extremely common, now much more regular with neatly squared tesserae often around 0.6 to 0.8 cm square.

Great variety of type can therefore be seen in the pavements of Pompeii and of Rome in the late second and early first centuries BC. They range from the utilitarian to the highly decorative, and are marked by a taste for vivid colour effects, for surface decoration, and for exploitation of the natural qualities of the stones. They stand in striking contrast to the simultaneous taste, in the richest houses, for *emblemata* and picture mosaics which disguise as far as possible the nature of the material, and which often aim at strongly three-dimensional effects. Almost all the pavement types just examined continued in use throughout the late Republic, and, outside Rome at least, into the first century of the Empire. They are often found in combination: an area of *signinum* can surround a tessellated or a sectile centrepiece, or a tessellated border be combined with a central area of *crustae*-pavement (for example figure 53).

More important for the future development of mosaics in the Roman world is the steady expansion, from the first century BC onwards, of the use of tessellated pavements and the variety of their decoration. Polychrome designs frequently use illusionistic three-dimensional motifs, some familiar from the eastern Hellenistic mosaics; among them are the perspective maeander, *trompe l'œil* cubes of lozenges, and the reticulate grid. Characteristically western appear to be patterns which imitate a coffered ceiling seen in perspective, often with a different motif, geometric, floral or occasionally figured, in the centre of each coffer. Designs of this type are common as bands across thresholds, but also sometimes cover whole floors, creating the effect of a ceiling design reflected on the floor.⁹ Excellent examples of these polychrome mosaics may be seen at the Villa of the Volusii Saturnini at Lucus Feroniae, north of Rome. To the late Republican phase of

⁸ Pernice 129–31.

⁹ M. Morricone Matini, 'Mosaici romani a cassettoni del I secolo a.C.', *ArchCl* 18, 1965, 75–91; A. Barbet, A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Le motif de caissons dans la mosaïque du IV^e siècle avant J.-C. à la fin de la République romaine: ses rapports avec l'architecture, le stuc et la



52 Pompeii VI 12,2, House of the Faun, *crustae*-pavement in *ala*. c.100 BC.

the villa, dated c.60–50 BC, belong two mosaics with perspective reticulate grids of squares or lozenges in red, green, ochre, black and white; one also has a narrow band with a coffered design in the same colours, the coffers containing little motifs of armour, and of birds and flowers¹⁰ (figure 54). They contrast vividly with the pavements from the early Imperial phase of the villa (c.10 BC–AD 20), which have black-and-white all-over geometric patterns (figures 55, 56).

Black-and-white (bichrome) ornamental mosaics also developed in the last century of the Republic. The earlier examples frequently imitate other types of pavement both in the motifs used and in composition. For example, a centrepiece designed like an *emblema* may be set in a plain surround, with an outer border, very commonly of maeander, and a separate strip on the threshold; here the black-and-white mosaic is clearly used as a cheaper substitute for polychrome. Floral and vegetal designs also appear in black-and-white: scrolls of ivy or vine used as borders, and rosettes as centrepieces (for example figure 305). But assimilation to the *signinum* pavements also led to the use of all-over patterns, which cover the whole floor except a narrow strip at the edge with a uniform two-dimensional pattern based on simple linear designs; these are normally black on white, sometimes the reverse. And as *opus sectile* grew in popularity in the later first century BC, this too was imitated in black-and-white mosaic, with geometric designs based on the opposition of solid areas of the two colours. All these elements resulted in a steady enrichment of the repertory, which continued to expand with the addition of ever more elaborate patterns. Many of these patterns were derived originally from other

peinture', *CMGR* IV, 23–37, pls.1–19; G. Becatti, 'Alcune caratteristiche del mosaico policromo in Italia', *CMGR* II, 175–9.

¹⁰ M. Moretti, A.M. Sgubini Moretti, *La Villa dei Volusii a Lucus Feroniae* (Rome 1977), 12–14, 28–30, pls. XXXV–XXXVI, XXXIX–XLII.



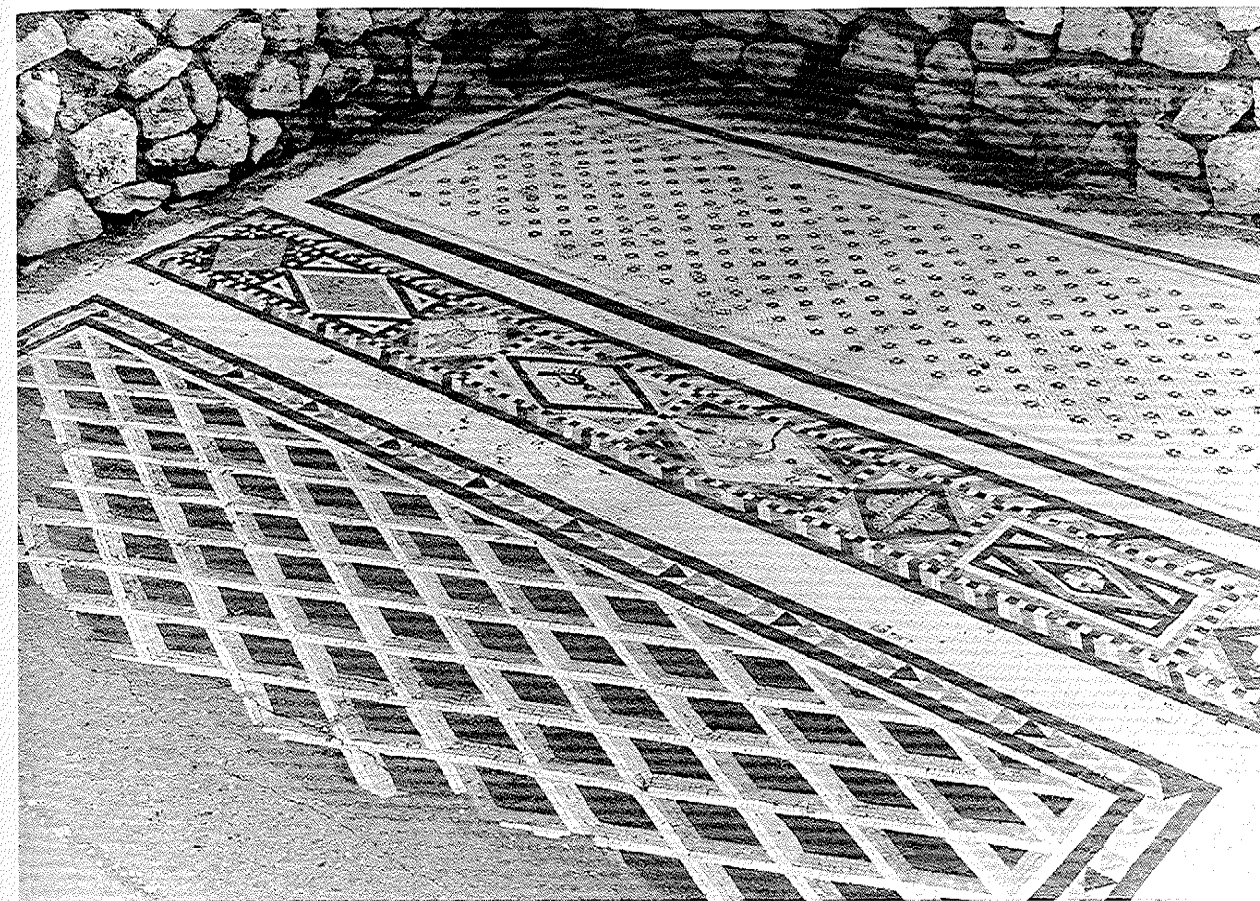
53 Pompeii 19.1, House of the beautiful Impluvium, atrium, *signinum* pavement with tessellated band around *impluvium*, *crustae*-pavement in *impluvium*.

media, especially from imitation of stuccoed ceilings, but they quickly lost any direct allusion to their source. By the middle of the first century AD the fashion was for repetitive all-over designs, often forming compartments filled with a variety of ornament¹¹ (for example figures 55, 56).

This expansion of black-and-white mosaic accompanied a change in taste which took place over the transition from the first century BC to the first century AD. It was seen in the previous chapter that the use of pictorial mosaics on the floor declined as figured panels came into frequent use in wall paintings. The liking for three-dimensional ornamental patterns, so characteristic of Hellenistic mosaics, also gave way to an emphasis on the decoration of the flat surface. A parallel may be drawn with the shift in wall painting from the illusionistic archi-

¹¹ Blake 1930, 78–86, 102–21; Pernice 134–46; M.L. Morricone, *EAA* suppl. (1970), s.v. 'mosaico', 504–31; Morricone, 'Aspetti del repertorio decorativo dei mosaici repubblicani di Roma', in P. Pensabene ed., *Marmi Antichi* (*StMisc* 26, 1981–3 (Rome 1985)), 135–43; de Vos, 'Paving techniques' (cit.n.1), 48–56.

tecture of the Second Style to the flat ornamented surfaces of the Third. In mosaic the way for this development was prepared by the essentially two-dimensional nature of the other types of pavement already in use. In addition, the growing use of exotic types of marble led to a great increase in the popularity of sectile pavements, which became the most prestigious form of floor decoration. The result was a profound change in the nature and position of mosaic, which lost its character as a rare and highly valued luxury. Coloured mosaic, both figured and ornamental, did not entirely disappear in Italy; but from the time of Augustus to the middle of the second century AD it was a rarity, especially in Rome itself and the central area of Italy. Black-and-white mosaic, on the other hand, grew ever more common. It doubtless recommended itself in the first place as an economical substitute for polychrome, though its austerity would also have appealed to the classicising tastes of the early Principate. More practically, the reduced work involved both in preparing the tesserae and in laying the patterns, at first pre-



54 Lucus Feroniae, Villa of Volusii Saturnini, room 18, late Republican polychrome geometric mosaic. c.60–50 BC.

dominantly rectilinear, made its use possible on a much wider scale: extensive areas could now be covered comparatively quickly and cheaply. From the mid-first century AD onwards the tesserae are usually slightly larger, averaging 0.8–1.0 cm square, and less regular than previously; a tendency to mass production had appeared.

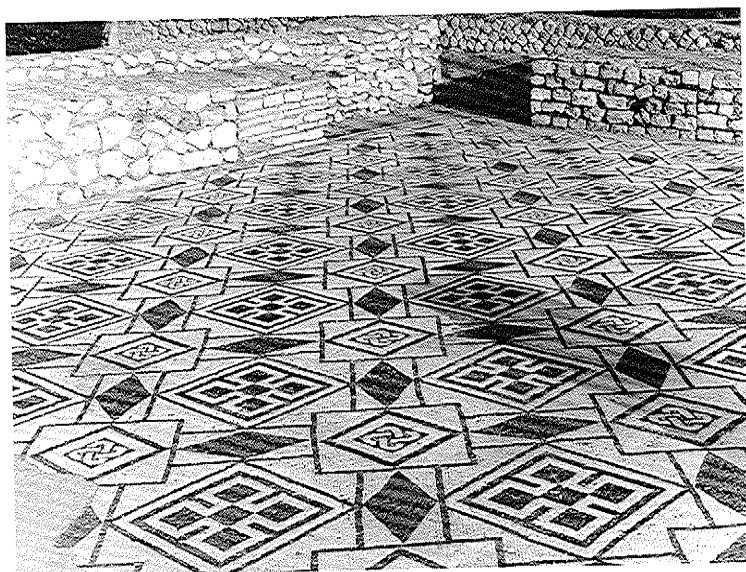
Another advantage of black-and-white mosaic lay in its flexibility; it could be adjusted without difficulty to any shape of space. Thus mosaic was used to differentiate the functions of individual rooms or parts of a room. Different patterns in the mosaic mark the distinction between the sleeping area of a *cubiculum*, the strip in front of the bed, and the antechamber; in a *triclinium* the distinction is between the space reserved for the couches around three sides of the room, and the area left vacant between them, which is often T-shaped.¹² Moreover as Roman architecture came to exploit the potential of concrete to construct rooms of varied shape, with increased use of curved space, the mosaic designs could conform; the full development of this tendency was to be reached with the great vaulted buildings of the second century AD.

Simple figured motifs also appeared in bichrome or near-bichrome mosaics before the end of the first century

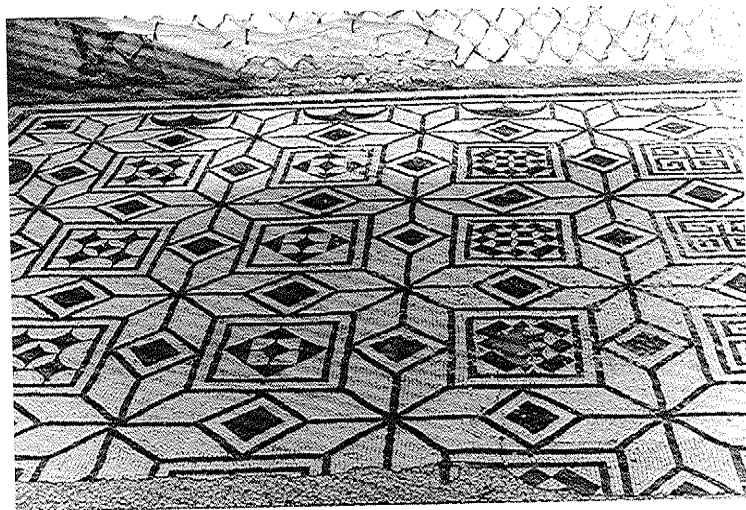
BC. The baths of the House of the Menander at Pompeii (110.4) were decorated c.40–20 BC. On the mosaic at the entrance to the *caldarium* (the hot room) are depicted a running slave carrying two jars of oil, a set of strigils (instruments for scraping the skin after exercise), and an ointment flask. In the heated room itself black-and-white borders surround a central field where two men swim and hunt fish and sea-creatures; a coloured rosette occupies a medallion in the centre (figure 57). The figures are represented against a plain white ground, with no hint of space or setting. The men are in black silhouette, with their eyes picked out in white; the one at the entrance wears a white loincloth. In the fish and the bath implements stripes of grey and green are used along with black, following their contour; but there is no modelling or shading, and minimal internal detail.¹³ Here, and in a group of similar

¹² Cf. K. Dunbabin, 'Triclinium and stibadium', in W.J. Slater ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991), 123–8; below, ch.19, section II.

¹³ A. Maiuri, *La Casa del Menandro e il suo tesoro di argenteria* (Rome 1933), 146, figs.56, 68–70; Pernice 60; Clarke 13–14, 59–61, figs.12–14. Cf. also J. Clarke, 'Mosaic workshops at Pompeii and Ostia Antica', *CMGR* v, 91–6, for related pavements.



55 Lucus Feroniae, Villa of Volusii Saturnini, room 13, early Imperial black-and-white geometric mosaic. c.10 BC–AD 20.



56 Lucus Feroniae, Villa of Volusii Saturnini, room 8, early Imperial black-and-white geometric mosaic. c.10 BC–AD 20.

pavements, the step to completely bichrome figured designs has not quite been taken, and the representation of the men in black is to some extent justified by their portrayal with Negroid features; but the break is absolute with the Hellenistic tradition of naturalistically coloured figures, and of the imitation of painting in stone. Moreover, not only is the design two-dimensional, but the central panel of the *caldarium* is no longer designed to be seen from one angle alone; the figures face towards different sides of the panel, offering three distinct view-

¹⁴ Blake 1930, 122; Clarke 10–11, 66, fig.8: dated c.AD 63–79.

¹⁵ Blake 1930, 121–2; Pernice 95; Clarke 10, 19, fig.5; ascribed to c.AD 50.

¹⁶ Above, ch.1, n.12.

points. One of the problems of the traditional *emblema* was that it normally offered only one satisfactory viewpoint, an obvious inconvenience especially in a room whose occupants were likely to move around. The black-and-white style does not necessarily abandon the single viewpoint, if the nature and use of the room made it appropriate: the running slave in the passage of the House of the Menander is set to be seen by someone entering the *caldarium*. But the essentially two-dimensional character of such designs made it possible to adapt them to the forms and demands of the architecture in this respect as well.

Pavements from the last three or four decades before the destruction of Pompeii show the extension of this black-and-white figured style, sometimes with slight touches of colour, sometimes purely bichrome. Best known are the animal thresholds, where dogs (and occasionally other animals) are represented in the entrance passage to the house. In the House of the Tragic Poet (vi 8,5) the appropriate inscription *cave canem*, 'beware of the dog', accompanies the image of a barking watchdog (figure 58). The animal is black, with white patches; his eyes, teeth, claws, and the interior of his ears are picked out with white tesserae, with touches of red in the eyes and for the tongue and a red collar. He is set in foreshortened three-quarter view; the pose, and lines of shadow attached to his front paws imply a sense of space, but this is neutralised by the white ground decorated with rows of larger black tesserae, a very common pattern emphasising the flat unified surface.¹⁴ This ambiguous treatment of space is more marked in some of the other animal thresholds. The dog in the House of Paquius Proculus (i 7,1), for example, is shown lying in front of the open doors of the house: a projection onto the mosaic of the real doors opening onto the passage where it is set.¹⁵ On others the background is completely neutral, with no hint of a spatial setting.

The animal thresholds reveal another characteristic of the figured black-and-white mosaics: their suitability to convey information, in addition to decoration. Inscriptions had been used in mosaic and other types of pavement since the fourth century BC, for instance to convey greetings or wishes of good augury, as in the Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos.¹⁶ Italian homeowners adopted the practice enthusiastically; inscriptions in *signinum* or tessellated floors at Pompeii include, in addition to simple greetings, phrases such as *salve lucru(m)* ('welcome profit') and *cedo cenemus* ('let's have dinner', at



57 Pompeii i 10,4, House of the Menander, *caldarium* mosaic. c.40–20 BC.

the entrance to a *triclinium*).¹⁷ The development of the black-and-white designs, which allowed an image to be detached from any pictorial context, encouraged its use as a sign, with or without accompanying words. Thus a certain A. Umbricius Scaurus at Pompeii, who had made his money manufacturing the famous fish sauce *garum*, had the pavement of his atrium designed to immortalise the source of his wealth: four jars of the characteristic shape for *garum* are represented, in white on a black ground, with inscriptions giving his name and the con-

tents of the vessels¹⁸ (figure 315). Few are quite so explicit as this in their self-advertisement; but the concept of using the floor as location for a message was established.

¹⁷ House of P. Vedius Sircus (vii 1,47), House of A. Octavius Primus (vii 15,12); other examples in de Vos, 'Paving techniques' (cit. n.1), 42.

¹⁸ vii 16,12–16; R. Curtis, 'A personalized floor mosaic from Pompeii', *AJA* 88, 1984, 557–66, pls.74–5, who suggests a date c. AD 25–35. See below, ch.20, n.15.



58 Pompeii vi 8.5, House of the Tragic Poet, mosaic from entrance with watchdog and *cave canem*. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. c.63–79 BC.

II

The extensive evidence which Pompeii (and, to a lesser extent, the other towns and villas of Campania) give for the development of pavement types in Italy comes to an end with the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. Fortunately another series carries on the story virtually without interruption, in Ostia, the port of Rome. Becatti catalogues nearly 500 pavements from that town, most of them still *in situ*; they begin in the late Republic and run through to the fourth century AD, with an especial concentration in the High Empire, the second and early third centuries AD.¹⁹ Unlike Pompeii, most are tessellated mosaics, with only a few examples of *signinum* and related types from the earlier periods; and the overwhelming majority are black-and-white. Both the social character of the town, very different from that of Pompeii, and the architectural developments of the Empire have their effect on the mosaics. In place of the private houses, many of them very luxurious, which characterise Pompeii for most of its

history, the typical dwellings at Ostia from the High Empire are *insulae*, multiple apartment blocks of brick-faced concrete. These offer a wide range of comfort and amenities, and the better of them are well equipped; but they are far from the ostentatious luxury of the richest houses in Pompeii. Only in the later third and fourth centuries AD did changing demographic and economic conditions permit the reappearance of a greater number of wealthy private dwellings, of a very different type from the houses of the late Republic and early Empire. On the other hand, public buildings at Ostia have a scale and magnificence unparalleled at Pompeii, especially the great vaulted bath buildings with their huge expanses of space. The commercial nature of the town also led to the decoration of buildings such as the meeting places of guilds; while the spread of new religions sometimes brought with it the need for a new iconography.

The better quality *insulae* and the rare private houses from the High Empire are decorated for the most part with black-and-white geometric mosaics.²⁰ For instance the *Insula* of the Muses (III.9.22), decorated in a single phase around AD 139, has mosaics in almost all its ground-floor rooms and the porticoes of the courtyard; they give a good sample of the decorative range²¹ (figure 59). The tendency to ever-greater elaboration of geometric ornament which began in the first century continues in the second, producing patterns complicated in overall design and with individual compartments laden with ornament. A very different taste for broadly effective designs, often curvilinear, with strongly contrasting areas of black and white is found simultaneously, and triumphs in the third century (figure 60; see also figure 299). A new development is the increasing use of stylised floral designs: all or part of the floor is covered with a tracery of curving arabesques, symmetrically arranged. Excellent examples of this style, whose heyday is during the reign of Hadrian, appear in the Casggiato of Bacchus and Ariadne (III.17.5), dated between AD 120 and 130.²² In one room (a *triclinium*) small birds and winged human figures are interwoven in the design, and a Gorgon's head is placed in a compartment at the centre; in the other a space is left at

90–109, on the Tomba della Mietitura on Isola Sacra.

²⁰ Overall surveys in *Ostia* 4, 263–5, 271–5, 277–90, 328–36, 356–9; for the general development of black-and-white ornamental designs in Italy in the second century see Blake 1936, 76–113, 186–206 (who knew only some of the Ostian mosaics).

²¹ *Ostia* 4, 128–33, nos. 237–67, pl. CCXXV.

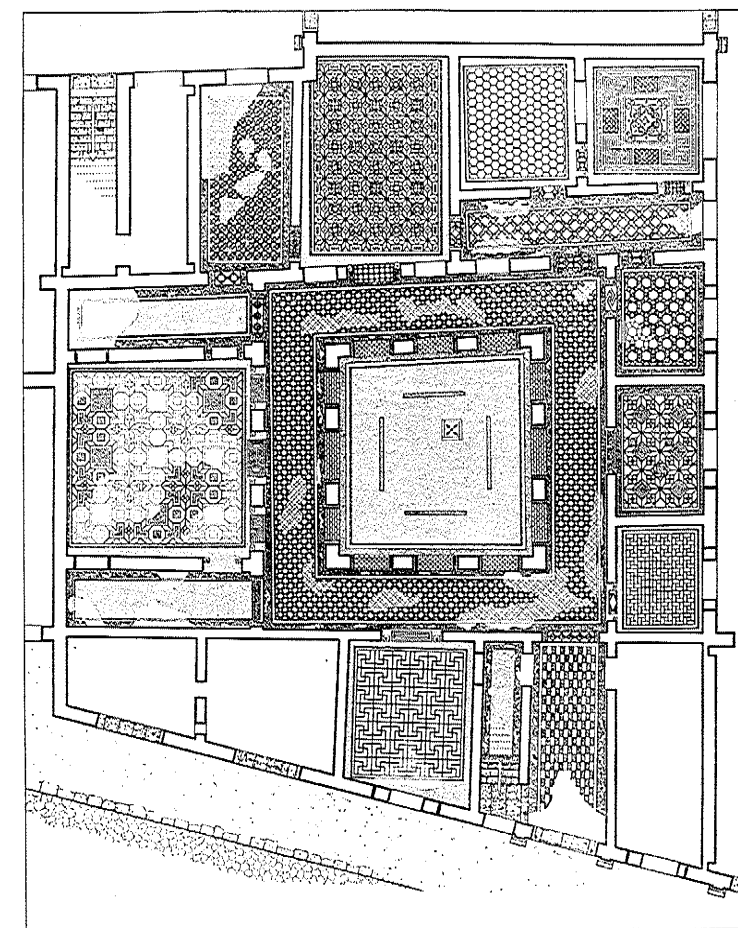
²² *Ostia* 4, 153–8, nos. 292–3, 288–9, pls. LXXV–LXXVIII, LXXX.

the centre free of the floral designs, and contains Dionysus, Ariadne, and other Bacchic figures, watching a wrestling match between Pan and Eros (figure 61).

The figures here illustrate the mature black-and-white figure-style of the second century AD. The black silhouette is relieved by extensive use of internal white lines, which mark facial features and hair, muscles and other anatomical details, folds of drapery, overlapping parts of the body or objects. The effect resembles that of black-figure vase-painting, though of course no direct connection exists. The figures are shown in foreshortened poses, frontal, three-quarter, and back view; they overlap one another, and possess a solidity greater than that of the pure silhouette. Spatial ambiguities persist: the background of the figures is plain white, but curved black lines attached to their feet represent cast shadows; Dionysus and Ariadne sit upon a rock, which emerges abruptly from the white ground; a small table (with the wreath for the victor) is shown in perspective, in front of the rock where Dionysus and Ariadne sit, and surrounded by a patch of white to make it stand out clearly.

The style is seen at its best in big public buildings such as baths. The Baths of Neptune (II.4.2), dedicated in AD 139, contain four large black-and-white mosaics; three have marine subjects, the fourth shows groups of athletes.²³ The huge central hall measures 18.10 m by 10.40 m, and is entirely paved with a single scene (figure 62). In the centre Neptune, holding his trident, drives a team of four sea-horses. Surrounding the god are two rings of sea-creatures: ichthyocentaurs, sea-monsters composed of every sort of animal forepart with a fish-tail, Nereids riding upon the monsters, dolphins ridden by Erotes, swimmers, and fish. The god and the figures close to him are set to be seen from the doorway of the adjoining room, which constitutes the primary viewpoint for the mosaic; but the encircling sea-monsters face each towards the side nearest to it. Viewers cannot therefore take in the figure-scene as a whole from any one position; but as they move around the room, or enter it from different doorways, figures appear in front of them. In the adjacent room, the main entrance to the complex, Amphitrite, bride of Neptune, rides a sea-horse to meet her husband, escorted by an Eros with a torch; a visual link between the two rooms is thereby provided, which would become clear only as the visitor passed from one to the next.

The figures in the Baths of Neptune are set against a completely plain white ground. Individual figures have a three-dimensional quality, with the tails of the sea-mon-



59 Ostia III.9.22, *Insula* of the Muses, plan. c. AD 139.

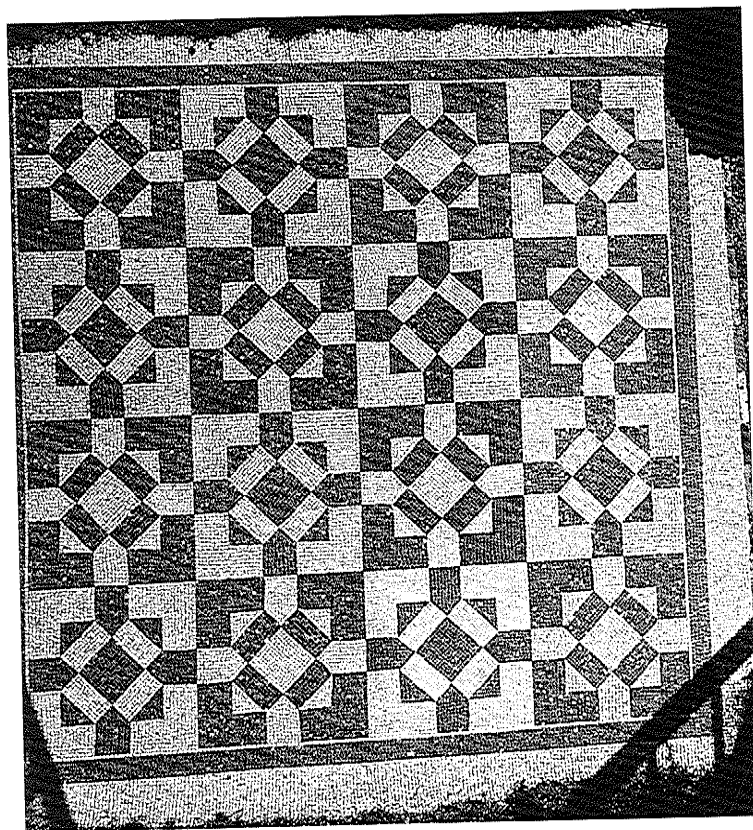
sters twisting in long sinuous coils and the four horses of the *quadriga* overlapping; but there is no attempt to create any sense of depth in the scene as a whole. Interior detail is rendered by fine white line, calligraphic in its effect and very convincing at a distance, although at a closer view some errors in the anatomy become apparent.

Black-and-white mosaics of this type continued to be produced at Ostia for the next hundred years. One development that can be seen during this period is a subordination of the figures to the requirements of a more formal composition. Thus in the Maritime Baths (III.8.2), dated around AD 210, one room contains a head of Ocean in the centre, surrounded by four Tritons; they are arranged heraldically, one in each corner, with their tails unfolding symmetrically along the sides.²⁴ Other floors show a tendency to crowd the composition, so that the figures

²³ *Ostia* 4, 47–52, nos. 69–72, pls. CXI, CXXIV–CXXXVI; Clarke 26–9, 69–73. A fifth pavement (*Ostia* 4, 52–9, no. 64) was almost entirely relaid at a much later date with good luck signs scattered at random over the surface; there is also a much smaller mosaic in the latrine, showing a Nilotic scene with pygmies (*ibid.* 59–60, no. 74, pl. CXVIII).

²⁴ *Ostia* 4, 112–13, no. 212, 340–1, pl. CXLVI; Clarke 49–50, 93–6, figs. 65, 89.

¹⁹ For the general characteristics of the Ostia mosaics, cf. *Ostia* 4, 247–52, and the chronological review in the following chapters. Since the publication of *Ostia* 4, other mosaics have been found; some are still unpublished, but see M. Floriani Squarciapino, 'Nuovi mosaici ostiensi', *RendPontAcc* 58, 1985–6 (1987), 87–114; V. Santa Maria Scrinari, 'Ostia Antica: il cosiddetto Palazzo Imperiale. Decorazioni musive', *ArchLaz* 9, 1988, 185–90; also I. Baldassarre, I. Bragantini, *BolldArch* 5–6, 1990,



60 Ostia II.8.5, House of Apuleius, geometric pavement. 2.50 m × 2.50 m. Mid-second century AD.

become merged in an overall surface pattern. In the marine scenes, for instance, the sea comes to be represented by broken black lines around the figures, rather than being left to the viewer's imagination as in the Baths of Neptune. This reaches an extreme in the Baths of the Lighthouse (Terme del Faro, IV.2.1), probably to be dated in the mid-third century (figure 63). Short, roughly parallel black lines cover the surface with a continuous network, into which the figures are inserted wherever space permits; a large lighthouse facing the entrance, and the huge marine goat on the same axis beyond it, provide the only dominant compositional features.²⁵

In the figure-style of the same period a major change takes place in the use of the internal white lines. They cease to render anatomical details with careful accuracy; instead a sketchy treatment accents parts of the figures almost impressionistically. This in turn gives way in the third century to increasing schematisation, whereby the figures are covered with a pattern of lines which is often

²⁵ Ostia 4, 173-4, no.320, 342, pls.CLXIV-CLXV; Clarke 51-2, 97-8, figs.69-71.

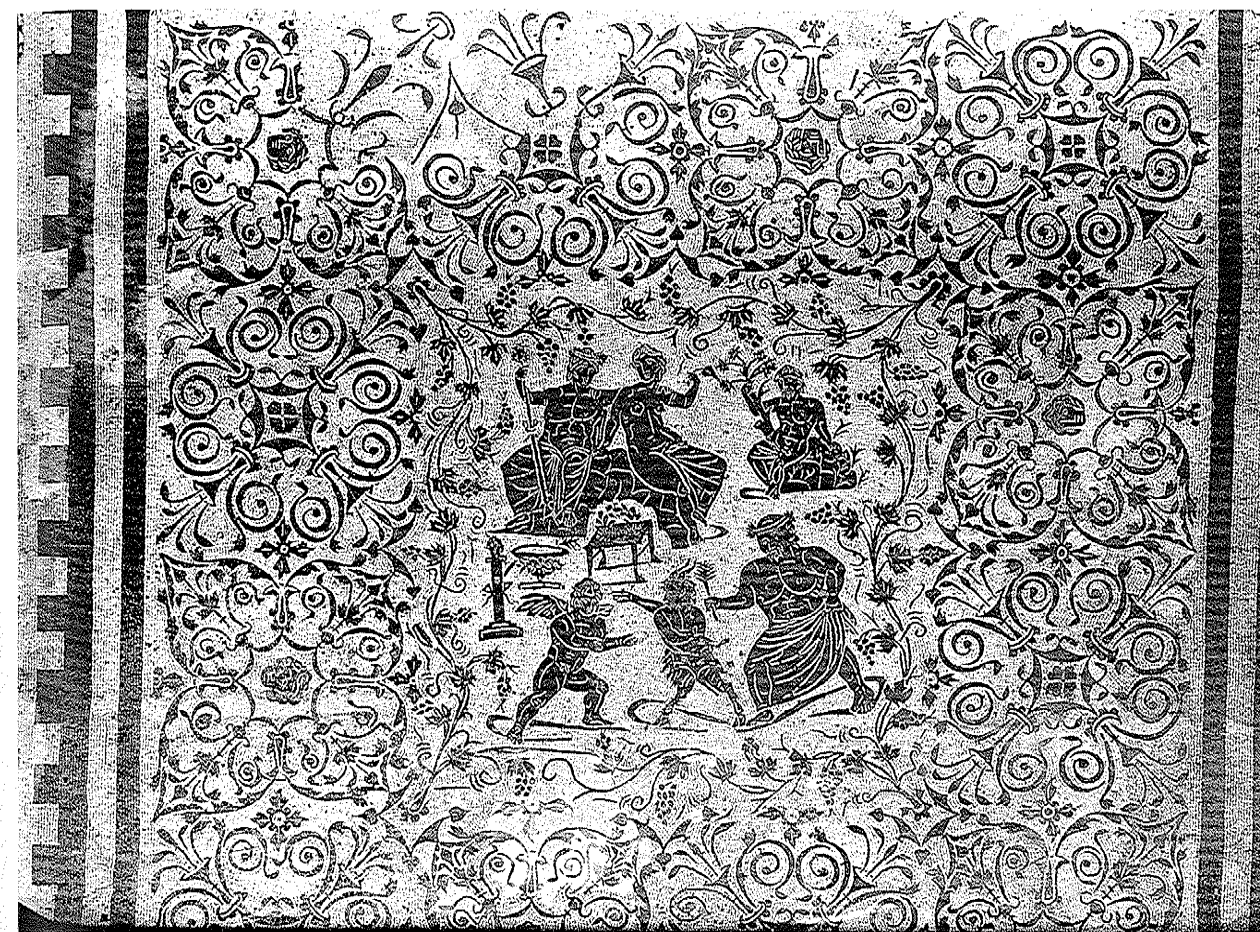
²⁶ To the examples in Ostia 4, add Floriani Squarciapino, 'Nuovi mosaici ostiensi' (cit.n.19), 110-12.

²⁷ Ostia 4, 64-85, nos.83-138, 345-8, pls.CLXXII-CLXXXVI; for the date cf. I. Pohl, 'Piazzale delle Corporazioni ad Ostia. Tentativo di ricostruzione del Portico Claudio e la sua decorazione', *MEFRA* 90, 1978, 332-4.

nearly abstract. The two mosaics just discussed both illustrate the later stages of this change. In the Maritime Baths short white lines on the Tritons' torsos and tails bear little relationship to anatomy, but serve to enliven the surface visually; in the Baths of the Lighthouse the creatures have become flat black silhouettes decorated with a near-abstract pattern of lines. The changes may be generally paralleled by transformations in other branches of art at the same period, which mark the emergence of the late antique style; both painting and relief sculpture show the same indifference to traditional rules of anatomy and to the rendering of organic three-dimensional form, the same tendency first to rely on optical effects, then to turn forms into two-dimensional patterns.

The black-and-white figured mosaics draw on a wide range of subject-matter. In addition to the marine subjects especially favoured in baths, mythological scenes are quite common: they are often reduced to stereotyped groups of the two or three main actors, distantly descended from well-known prototypes in painting or sculpture. Contemporary subjects now appear fairly widely, for instance scenes of athletes, which are also used as an appropriate decoration for baths.²⁶ The suitability of this style to convey a message is exploited in a number of different contexts, most remarkably in the Square of the Corporations behind the theatre (II.7.4). The porticoes here were transformed into a series of rooms or booths, which were paved with separate mosaic panels, most dating between the late second and the third century AD (figures 64, 65). Inscriptions on many of these identify them as the seat of various commercial groups, including shippers and businessmen from several cities in North Africa, Sardinia, and Gaul.²⁷ Many are decorated with images which allude to their activities: merchant ships, lighthouses, dolphins, and other marine references, and objects such as grain measures or amphorae; an elephant symbolises the shippers from Sabratha in Tripolitania; an extraordinary bird's-eye view shows a river crossed by a pontoon bridge. The ships and other objects serve entirely as emblems; there is little or no attempt to construct a coherent pictorial scene from them.

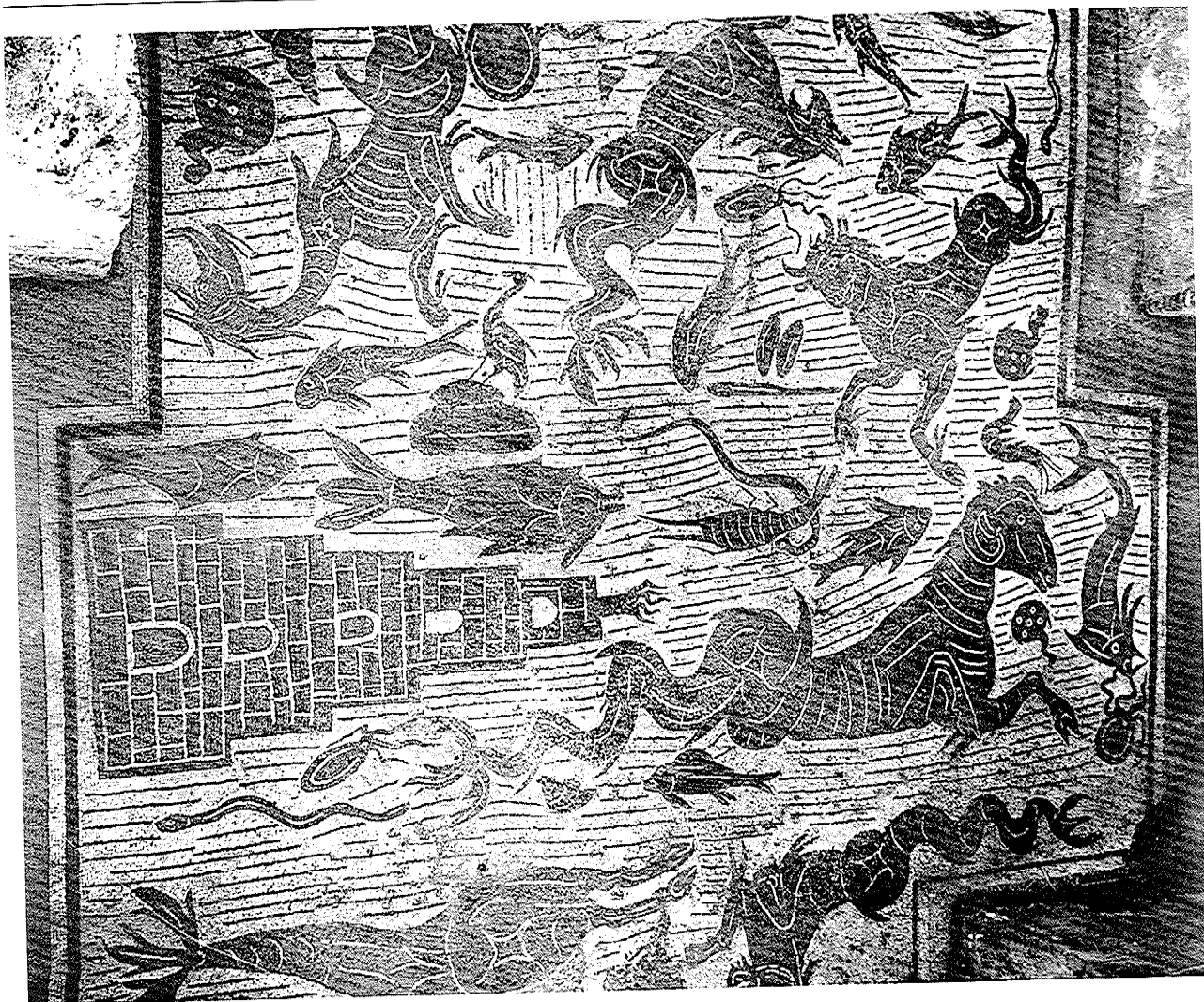
Some religious shrines also used black-and-white mosaic as a medium in which to convey information. Foremost among them are those dedicated to the Persian god Mithras, whose sanctuaries were especially popular in Ostia in the second and third centuries. At least sixteen are known, mostly long narrow vaulted rooms, imitating an underground cave, lined on two sides with benches



61 Ostia III.17.5, Casggiato of Bacchus and Ariadne, Dionysus and Ariadne in arabesque design. 6 m × 7 m. c. AD 120-30.



62 Ostia II. 4.2, Baths of Neptune, central hall with Neptune mosaic. 18.10 m × 10.40 m. AD 139.



63 Ostia IV.2.1, Baths of the Lighthouse, marine creatures and lighthouse. Maximum dimensions 7.80 m × 7.20 m. Mid-third century AD.

and with an altar at the end. In several the central passage is paved with mosaic, which represents the sacred symbols of the cult or alludes to its practices. In the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres (II.8.6) the passage is marked off by seven successive semi-circles, which must allude to Mithraic doctrines about seven grades of initiation and the seven heavenly gates; at the entrance to the central passage is a dagger, presumably the sacrificial dagger recalling that with which Mithras killed the bull. The podia on either side are faced with mosaic: on the sides the planetary deities, along the top the signs of the zodiac²⁸ (figure 66). Similarly in the Mithraeum of

²⁸ Ostia 4, 90–1, no.154; G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia 2, I Mitrei* (Rome 1954), 47–51, fig.10, pls.vi–viii. First ascribed by Becatti to the Antonine period, in Ostia 4 to the third century. R. Beck, 'Sette Sfere, sette Porte, and the spring equinoxes of A.D. 172 and 173', in U. Bianchi ed., *Mysteria Mithrae* (EPRO 80, Leiden 1979), 515–29, argues that the arrangement of the planets is intended to commemorate the vernal equinoxes of AD 172 and 173.

Felicissimus (V.9.1) the central passage is divided into seven compartments containing symbols of the seven grades of initiation; at the entrance are represented a burning altar, a crater, and the two caps of the Dioscuri, while another crater stands among branches of various plants beneath the dedicatory inscription, immediately in front of the place where the altar must have stood.²⁹

Polychrome mosaics are not unknown at Ostia in the second and third centuries, but they are rare. The fourth century sees a revival of polychromy, here as in other parts of Italy, though *opus sectile* was preferred for the most luxurious settings.³⁰ The most extensive use of polychrome

²⁹ Ostia 4, 227–30, no.428, 351–2, pl.cxciv; Becatti, *I Mitrei* (cit.n.28), 105–12, fig.22, pl.xxiv, 2–xxv; probably mid-third century.

³⁰ Cf. Floriani Squarciapino, 'Nuovi mosaici ostiensi' (cit.n.19), 89–114, for polychrome mosaics from baths, probably early fourth century. *Opus sectile*: ch.15, ns.30–1.



64 Ostia II.7.4, Square of the Corporations, booth no.21, mosaic with inscription of shippers and businessmen of Karalis. 3.50 m × 4.0 m. Late second to early third century AD.

mosaic is in the House of the Dioscuri (III.9.1), one of the wealthy private houses inserted into older constructions at this period. One room here has a geometric design with floral ornament; another a figured panel showing the Dioscuri at the centre of a predominantly geometric pattern; a third an all-over marine scene, with Venus riding in her shell at the centre of Tritons, Nereids, and sea-monsters (figure 67). This last is composed in a way similar to the black-and-white marine scenes, with the figures arranged freely in a ring around the central group, against a sea rendered by groups of broken grey and black lines. The type of composition is found at an earlier date on polychrome mosaics in other parts of the empire, especially in North Africa; African influence on the mosaics of the House of the Dioscuri has been posited for other reasons, and may be seen more generally on polychrome mosaics in Italy at this date. The treatment of the figures also shows characteristics of the period: inorganic anatomy, a loss of interest in the third dimension, a heavy reliance on linear outline, and a tendency to set the tesserae in stripes and bands of colour, rather than to model by gradations of shading; all these features will be discussed more fully in later chapters.³¹

³¹ Ostia 4, 114–23, nos.215–17, 360–1, pls.lxv, cxlix–cliii, cci, ccxiv–ccxvii. T. Heres, *Paries* (Amsterdam 1982), 135–6, 477–85, ascribes the construction and decoration of the house to the first quarter of the fifth century, on the basis of its masonry.

³² M. Donderer, *Die Chronologie der römischen Mosaiken in Venetien und Istrien bis zur Zeit der Antonine* (Archäologische Forschungen 15, Berlin 1986), covers predominantly black-and-white examples in the North. Blake 1936, 76–113, 138–71, quotes examples from all over Italy;



65 Ostia II.7.4, Square of the Corporations, booth no.25. 5.50 m × 3.50 m. Late second to early third century AD.

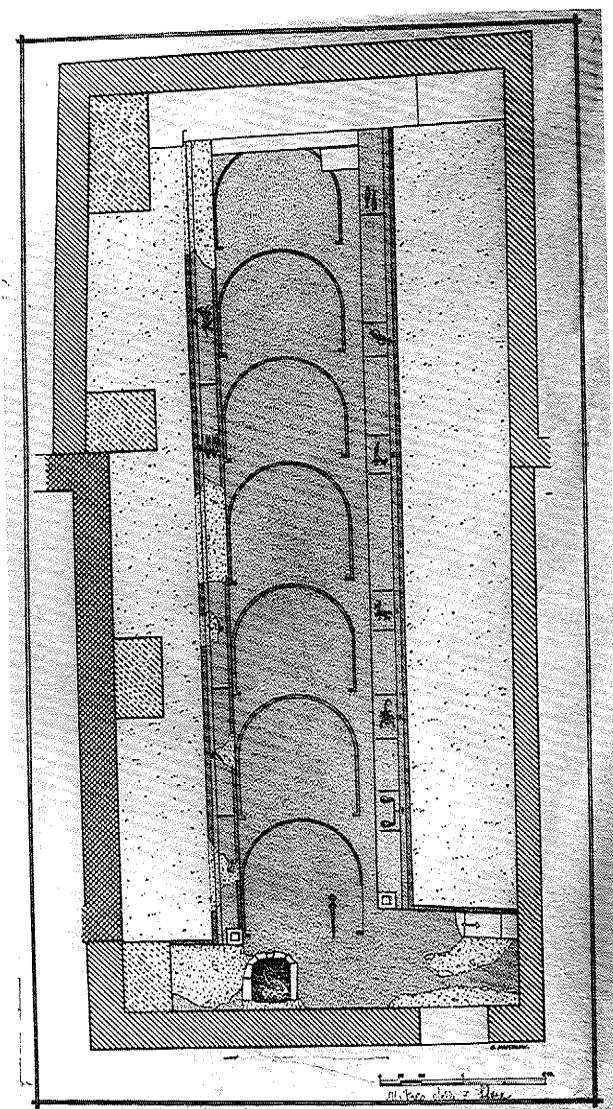
III

Other parts of Italy echo developments in Ostia in some respects, but not in all. The fashion for black-and-white mosaic reached its fullest expansion in Rome and the region around it, but it also spread widely throughout the peninsula and even to Sicily, in both geometric and figured forms; these do not differ greatly from the examples seen in Ostia.³² Polychrome mosaics have been found in considerable numbers in Rome and the villas around it, where a demand existed for more luxurious products than were normal in Ostia; but most have suffered so heavily from restoration that their original character is difficult to assess. They are also more frequent in other areas of Italy, but there is still a lack of securely dated material, especially from the second and third centuries, and the chronology is often controversial. It is also difficult to assess the extent of regional differences, though it is clear that various areas had their own traditions and reacted in different ways to fashions from elsewhere. Only a general, and in part provisional, outline of their evolution can therefore be given, and many of the new developments in polychrome mosaic are better assessed in other parts of the Empire.³³

One exceptional complex must be considered separately, the great Villa that the Emperor Hadrian built at

Blake 1940, 82–98, covers Rome alone. For Sicily cf. Boesliger, 83–127; below, ch.8, n.2.

³³ Cf. Blake 1936, 116–37, 172–84; Blake 1940, 98–119; Becatti, *CMGR* II, 173–92; see now K. Werner, *Mosaiken aus Rom: Polychrome Mosaikpavimente und Emblemata aus Rom und Umgebung* (Würzburg 1995), whose dating often differs from those accepted here.



66 Ostia 11.8.6, Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres. Second half of the second century AD (perhaps AD 172/3).

Tibur (Tivoli) between AD 118 and 133/4. The majority of the grand rooms and areas of the Villa were paved in *opus sectile*; but mosaic appeared in several different forms.³⁴ Very simple plain white and black-and-white mosaics, in part imitating the older floors of a Republican villa incorporated into the Hadrianic building, were used in service quarters, corridors, and other secondary areas. In the so-called *Hospitalia*, probably designed to accommodate upper-class servants or attendants, a series of bedrooms are paved with more decorative black-and-white designs; they have geometric patterns in the niches where the beds stood and elegant floral arabesques like those of contem-

³⁴ De Franceschini, *passim*; for the *sectile* pavements, cf. ch.15, ns.28–9. A number of mosaics of dubious authenticity are also supposed to have come from the Villa, but will not be discussed here.

³⁵ E. Borgia, *Bollettino di Archeologia* 8, 1991, 73–83.

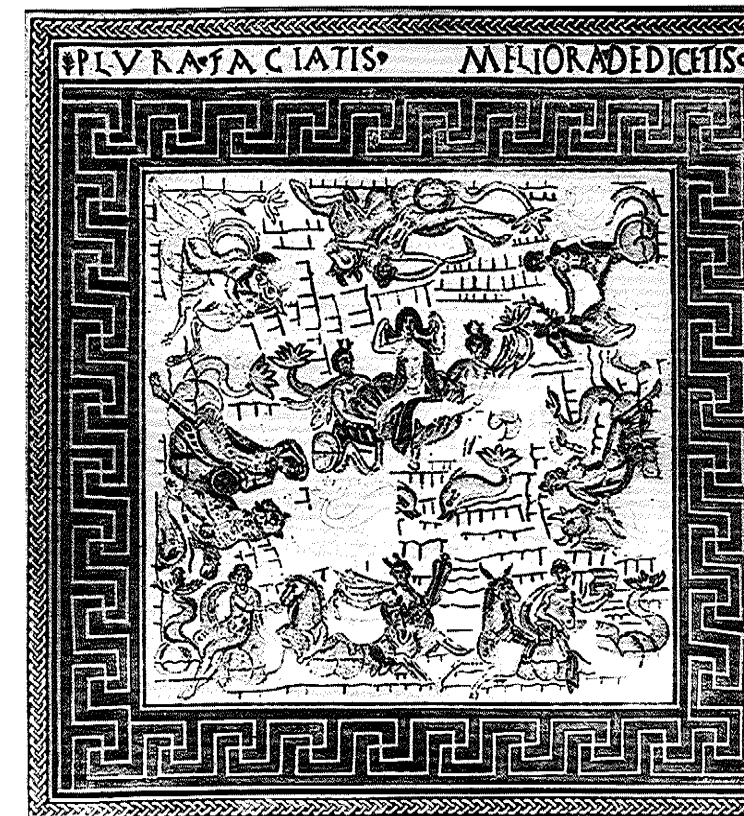
porary Ostia in the centre³⁵ (figures 68, 69). Polychrome geometric and floral designs were also used in the Villa (though little is preserved *in situ*), but in a subordinate role to *sectile* pavements, for instance in secondary areas of buildings mainly paved in the more expensive technique. Finally, a number of very fine figured *emblemata* were found in the Villa, though all were removed by the eighteenth-century excavators and their original contexts cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed. They include the famous panel with the Doves of Sosos, now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (figure 27), a panel nearly as famous in Berlin, with a battle between centaurs and felines in a rocky landscape (figure 70), and a series of heavily restored panels in the Vatican Museums with pastoral scenes, animals, and masks. There has never been agreement whether these *emblemata* are original Hadrianic works or older works reused. As discussed in the previous two chapters, it seems to me inconceivable that a work as fine as the Doves mosaic can be anything other than original Hellenistic work, produced while the tradition of picture mosaics was still at its height, and carefully treasured as an Old Master in Hadrianic setting; and I believe the same to be true of the mosaic of the Centaurs. Nothing that can be attributed with certainty to the second century AD is fully comparable to these either in technique or in the vitality of the pictorial tradition; and details such as the illusionistic bead-and-reel border of the Doves mosaic on its dark ground find their best parallels in Hellenistic work. The Hadrianic mosaicists were capable of imitating Hellenistic workmanship, as is shown by sections from the outer border of the Doves mosaic, which must have been made for its final setting; but they do not have the subtlety of the main work.³⁶ Whether any of the other *emblemata* (many of which have suffered extensive modern restoration) were created especially for the Villa is more difficult to say, especially in the absence of any evidence for their original setting. Picture-mosaics of a quality comparable to the pastoral scenes or the panels with masks were being produced in eastern Mediterranean centres at this date; Hadrian might have acquired them there, or the craftsmen might have migrated to Italy. The *emblemata* apart, however, the general message of the pavements of Hadrian's Villa is to make quite clear the relative position of the different tech-

³⁶ Above, ch.2, n.30; cf. Donderer, *RömMitt* 98, 1991, 189–97; De Franceschini 337, 342–4, 610; Parlasca, *Jdl* 78, 1963, 256–63 (Hadrianic); E. Moormann, *AA* 1987, 153–8, on fragments of the outer border, preserved in several European museums.

niques in a hierarchy of values. *Opus sectile* is overwhelmingly the technique preferred for all the more noble and prestigious uses; mosaic – even polychrome mosaic – is restricted to secondary uses and positions.

In less august settings the use of mosaic flourished. There appears, on our present evidence, to be a general decline in Italy in the use of polychrome mosaic between the reign of Augustus and the second century AD, though coloured details in otherwise black-and-white floors are found occasionally. In the second century the taste for colour revives, but in forms usually very different from those of the late Republic; indeed the ornamental designs generally developed in a way parallel to the black-and-white. Floral and vegetal patterns with intricate stylised arabesques are comparable to those in black-and-white from the Hadrianic period, and presumably to be dated similarly. Geometric mosaics show the same taste as the black-and-white for increasingly elaborate, mainly curvilinear ornament, and cover the floor with similar all-over repetitive two-dimensional patterns, often forming compartments which may contain ornamental or figured motifs.³⁷

Emblemata of the traditional sort, worked separately and mounted on tiles or trays of marble, continued to be made; but they differ both in individual style and in the way they were used from those of the Hellenistic period. The composition with the single 'picture' in the centre of the floor is abandoned, and instead a number of *emblemata* are combined in a single pavement. In a villa at Baccano, north of Rome, one such pavement was discovered; accounts of the original excavation record that it contained originally thirty-two distinct *emblemata*. The subjects include the Muses, a bust of Spring, mythological scenes, and marine subjects; a diverse group, unified principally by the desire to decorate a large surface area. The mythological scenes are conceived as 'pictures', with a continuous background creating a sense of depth: Polyphemus, for instance, feeling the fleece of the ram beneath which Ulysses is clinging, is set against the rocky mouth of his cave. But the landscape is rendered by strongly contrasting stripes and patches of colour, very different from the carefully modulated colouring of the landscapes from Hadrian's Villa. In the *emblemata* with the Muses the figures simply stand on a tiny strip of groundline, isolated against a plain white background; there is no attempt to create a setting. The tesserae vary in size in the different *emblemata*, with a range of about two to six millimetres square (a little larger than in most

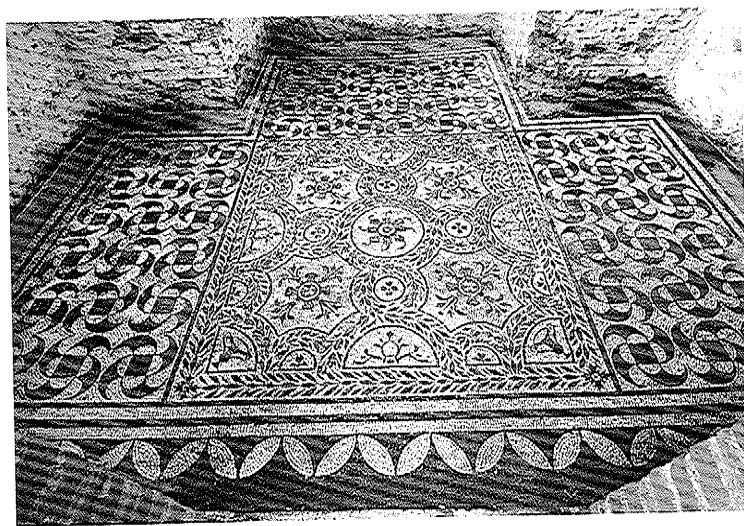


67 Ostia 111.9.1, House of the Dioscuri, marine scene, drawing of whole. 10 m × 10.50 m. Late fourth to early fifth century AD.



68 Tibur, Hadrian's Villa, *Hospitalia*, black-and-white mosaics in *cubiculum*. AD 118–133/4.

³⁷ Cf. Blake 1936, 114–37; Blake 1940, 98–101. Morricone, *EAA* suppl. (cit.n.11), 520–8, gives a survey of decorative designs in use mainly on polychrome mosaics from the late second century onwards, but includes material from outside Italy.



69 Tibur, Hadrian's Villa, *Hospitalia*, black-and-white mosaics in *cubiculum*. AD 118–133/4.

Hellenistic *emblemata*), and the quality is also variable; in the better executed examples the figures are modelled three-dimensionally in the traditional way, but in some there is greater emphasis on the outlines. There is no decisive evidence for the date, but it appears that *emblemata* of varying origins and dates have been combined together, probably in the Severan period.³⁸

In other pavements the distinction between figured panel and setting is blurred. Geometric frameworks divide the floor into panels or compartments of various shapes; and though in some the motifs which fill these compartments differ in technique from the coarser surrounding patterns, in others this distinction is abandoned. The tendency is towards a uniform all-over design, in which the figures act only as secondary details. There is no attempt to compose a unified picture, or to create any sense of recession; individual motifs (which may be complete figures, groups, parts of figures such as busts, or objects) are set against a plain ground, with at the most a narrow strip of groundline. The method of composition was also common on black-and-white mosaics, and will be met very frequently in mosaics from other parts of the Empire, and examined more fully there. Although secure dates are lacking it is generally accepted that the crucial steps in this direction were taken in the Antonine period, and that the process was complete by the third century.

³⁸ G. Becatti, E. Fabricotti, A. Gallina, P. Saronio, F.R. Serra, M.P. Tambella, *MosAntIt* Reg.7a, *Baccano: villa romana* (Rome 1970), esp. 80–5; M.R. Sanzi di Mino, 'Il mosaico con cassettonato policromo dalla villa romana di Baccano', *Atti III Colloquio AISCOR* (1996), 501–14.

³⁹ L. Fabbrini, 'Terme di Caracalla: il pavimento musivo nei due ambu-

Somewhat later comes a change in the treatment of the figures themselves. Traditional pictorial naturalism, dependent upon fine colouristic detail, is replaced by a style which aims at broader and more schematic effects: colour may be applied in broad bands or contrasting patches, or the contours of the figures may be emphasised by strong outlines, and detail given by linear means. Again accurate dates are in short supply, and the change probably appeared earlier in some regions than others; but the third century is once more likely to have seen the decisive break with tradition. The result is a final abandonment of the attempt to imitate painting in mosaic, replaced by effects more suited to the medium itself.

The distance separating the new style of mosaic from the old may be illustrated by the mosaic of the Athletes from the Baths of Caracalla in Rome. The Baths were also decorated with black-and-white marine mosaics, and with large repetitive polychrome patterns, unusual in their use of porphyry and marble tesserae.³⁹ The Athletes occupied the semi-circular *exedrae* of the *palaestrae*, two vast spaces each twenty-four metres in diameter. These were divided by bands of guilloche into grids of squares and rectangles, somewhat ill-adapted to the curved space (figure 71). The panels contained life-size standing figures and even larger busts of nude athletes, many holding athletic equipment or prize-crowns and palms; other panels showed their trainers. The standing figures are set on a very artificial band of groundline, against an otherwise plain ground; the busts rest on the baseline of the panel. The huge figures are represented with bulging muscles, in a variety of realistic poses; strong chiaroscuro effects, with broad patches and stripes of colour, exaggerate the modelling. Faces are realistic, often brutally so, presenting characteristic stereotypes of the professional athlete. The taste for the colossal, the accumulative composition, the absence of any attempt to compose a scene, are characteristic of the new taste, as is the expressive brutality of the portraiture. Their date is controversial; several scholars have proposed a date in the fourth century on the basis of style, but there are no solid grounds to separate them from the construction period of the baths (AD 212–16).⁴⁰

laci superiori delle c.d. palestre', *CMGR* 111, 51–60; F. Guidobaldi, 'Mosaici con tessere porfiritiche a Roma tra III e IV secolo', *ibid.* 491–503.

⁴⁰ A. Insalaco, 'I mosaici degli atleti dalle Terme di Caracalla', *ArchCl* 41, 1989, 293–327, with arguments for accepting a dating to the Severan period in the absence of archaeological evidence. For a fourth-



70 Tibur, Hadrian's Villa, *emblemata* with centaurs fighting wild beasts. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. 0.914 m × 0.584 m. Either first century BC or early second century AD.

IV

In the fourth century the taste for polychrome mosaic was thoroughly re-established and it was black-and-white that became rare. Ornamental designs now cover large areas with repetitive patterns, often based upon the interlace of ribbons or guilloche, using single shades of three or four colours. Floors of the compartmented type assemble numerous figures or little scenes, isolated unrealistically against a plain ground. Beside these, a new taste appeared for big unified scenes, often with narrative subject-matter taken from fields such as the amphitheatre or the circus; elements of landscape provided a setting, but were used in an essentially unrealistic way. This new style appeared earlier in other parts of the Empire, especially North Africa (where it will be studied in greater

detail), and its appearance in Italy at this date is almost certainly an indication of the new influence from the provinces making itself felt in the original centre of the empire.⁴¹

The character of the new polychrome style may be seen very clearly in the Villa at Desenzano on Lake Garda, in the north of Italy; a date in the mid-fourth century AD is likely⁴² (figure 72). Carpets of polychrome mosaic cover the porticoes of the peristyle, an octagonal room opening off one end of it, a triconch with antechamber on the other (one of the great dining-reception rooms characteristic of late antiquity), as well as several smaller spaces. Most of the mosaics are geometric: repetitive patterns of grids or rows of circles in three or four basic colours (red, pink, ochre, sometimes green, as well as black and white), making extensive use of guilloche and interlace designs.

century date, based in part on their difference from the black-and-white mosaics from the baths, see J.-P. Darmon, *CMGR* 19, 99; E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, *ibid.* 104. The mosaics, now in the Vatican Museums, have been heavily restored.

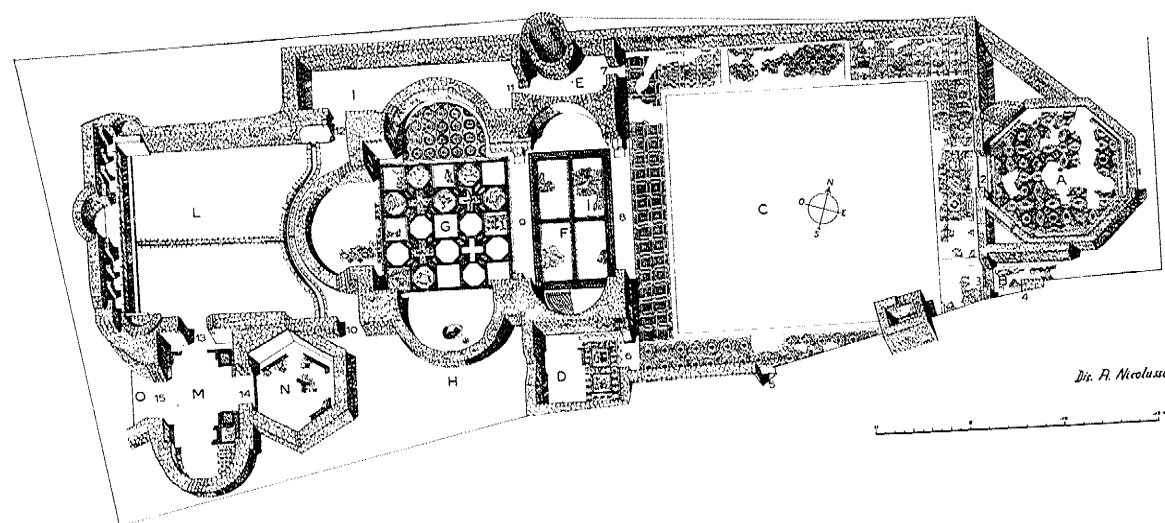
⁴¹ Below, ch.7, sections 111–14; see Lavin, 'Hunting mosaics', 251–62; Dunbabin, *MRA* 212–17. For an example of this type in Rome cf. the hunting pavement from the Esquiline: J. Aymard, 'Quelques

scènes de chasse sur une mosaïque de l'Antiquarium', *MEFR* 54, 1937, 42–66, pls.1–111; Lavin, *ibid.*, 258, figs.122–3.

⁴² E. Ghislanzoni, *La Villa romana in Desenzano* (Milan 1962); M. Mirabella Roberti, 'Nuovi mosaici dalla Villa romana di Desenzano', *CMGR* 19, 107–17, pls.111–1111; the mosaics may not all be contemporary.



71 Rome, Baths of Caracalla, Mosaic of Athletes, reconstruction. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums. Probably AD 212–216.



72 Desenzano, Villa, plan with mosaics *in situ*. Probably mid-fourth century AD.



73 Desenzano, Villa, vestibule (F), fishing Erotes, detail.

Figured motifs appear in compartments in the more important rooms. In the centre of the triconch an elaborate pattern of crosses, octagons and squares has floral motifs in some of the compartments, hunting scenes, Dionysiac groups, and Erotes in a flowery setting in others. In the antechamber to the triconch four larger panels contained marine scenes, with Erotes fishing and sailing in boats (figure 73). The colouring in the figured panels is much richer, with glass providing shades of blue, green, and yellow. The drawing varies greatly in quality, but is heavily dependent on outlines; colour is used in broad patches, and there is very little modelling of the figures. The backgrounds are either plain, with a ground-line for the figures to stand on, or broken by unrealistic patches and stripes of colour to suggest a landscape; in the

marine scenes, the sea is rendered by broken zigzag lines. The overall effect is of a rather monotonous richness, lacking in fine detail or elegance of execution, but enlivened by the brightly coloured figured decoration, itself essentially ornamental in function.

Patronage of a different sort came with the needs of the new Christian churches built after Constantine. The great churches built in Rome by Constantine himself were undoubtedly paved with marble, but mosaic pavements were used in many smaller churches, and the earliest examples belong entirely within the tradition of contemporary secular mosaics. Excellent examples are preserved at Aquileia in northern Italy, a town with flourishing mosaic workshops which had been producing polychrome mosaics, both geometric and with figured motifs enclosed in compartments, throughout the third and fourth centuries.⁴³ Twin basilicas are preserved here side by side, both decorated with mosaics; inscriptions on the mosaics acclaim Theodorus, bishop in the second decade of the fourth century.⁴⁴ Their floors are divided into a series of sections covered with geometric carpets, all with designs in common use in the secular buildings of the region. They form compartments which contain both floral and figured motifs. In the northern building, the figures consist of animals and birds, without clear Christian allusions. The mosaics of the southern hall also contain much neutral decoration of this sort, but the range is extended. Several compartments contain busts which appear to be portraits, probably of local donors who contributed to the building.⁴⁵ A few motifs have specific Christian symbolism, such as the Good Shepherd, and a Victory between what are probably symbols of the Eucharist. Finally, the whole area at the east end of the southern building is occupied by a single panel, which contains a marine scene with fish and fishers, in composition comparable to innumerable others used in baths and domestic buildings, such as the villa at Desenzano just discussed. Into it, however, are introduced three scenes from the story of Jonah, thrown overboard to be swallowed by the sea-monster, regurgitated by the monster, and reclining at

⁴³ Donderer, *Die Chronologie* (cit. n. 32); L. Bertacchi, 'Nuovi mosaici figurati di Aquileia', *AquilNost* 34, 1963, 19–84.

⁴⁴ G. Brusin, P. Zovatto, *Monumenti Paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado* (Udine 1957), 20–125; J.-P. Caillet, *L'Evergétisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges, d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe–VIIe s.)* (CEFR 175, Rome 1993), 123–41, with full bibliography. The northern hall has usually been dated earlier, before

Constantine's Edict of Toleration of the Christians, but Caillet accepts the date of 313–19 for the whole complex.

⁴⁵ H. Kähler, *Die Stiftermosaiken in der Konstantinischen Südkirche von Aquileia* (Cologne 1962), proposed an identification of the portraits as Constantine and members of the imperial family, countered by G.C. Menis, 'I ritratti nei mosaici pavimentali di Aquileia', in *Mosaici in Aquileia e nell'Alto Adriatico* (Antichità Altoadriatiche 8, 1975), 78–88.

ease under the gourd: a common Christian symbol of salvation.⁴⁶

The mosaics of the Aquileia basilicas show mosaicists working within the traditions that had evolved for the decoration of secular buildings (the same workshop was undoubtedly responsible for the mosaics of private houses in Aquileia), but gradually developing motifs with specific Christian content. The subsequent development of Christian mosaics in Italy lies outside the limits of this study, but churches continued to be decorated with mosaic pavements. In general, the floor played a comparatively minor part in the decorative programme of these buildings: the designs are predominantly ornamental, with a limited range of symbolic motifs, while in some regions a tendency developed to use the pavement for inscriptions recording donations made to the building by the faithful.⁴⁷ These traditions continued without interruption into the early Middle Ages. Although the reper-

tory generally became impoverished, the range of materials more limited, and the technical skills of the craftsmen less, the basic training and organisation of the mosaic workshops evidently continued to operate in the sixth century, and later in some regions, much as it had in the first.

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M. de Vos, 'Paving techniques at Pompeii', *ArchNews* 16, 1991, 36–60; Blake 1930; Pernice; Clarke; *Ostia* 4; Blake 1936; G. Becatti, *CMGR* 1, 15–28; Becatti, *CMGR* 11, 173–92; Blake 1940. Six volumes of the corpus *MosAntIt* have appeared prior to 1996, covering the Palatine region of Rome (1967), Baccano (1970), Antium (1975), Ravenna (1976), Sardinia (1981), Stabiae (1989), as well as monographic studies on the *signinum* pavements of Rome and vicinity (1971) and the *sectile* pavements of Hadrian's Villa (1994).

vincing), then we have here a literal 'Christianisation' or the traditional secular repertory.

⁴⁷ Cf. the later monuments cited in Brusin and Zovatto, *Monumenti* (cit.n.44); R. Farioli, *Pavimenti musivi di Ravenna paleocristiana* (Ravenna 1975); Cailliet, *L'Evergétisme* (cit.n.44), *passim*; below, ch.20, n.41.

⁴⁶ W.N. Schumacher, *Hirt und 'Guter Hirt'* (*RömQSch* Suppl.34, Rome–Freiburg–Vienna 1977), 253–73, argues that the Jonah scenes are in fact, like the inscription of Theodorus, secondary insertions into the mosaic, replacing boats which originally held fishing Erotes; and that the whole complex was not originally Christian. If he is correct (and his observations concerning the Jonah scenes are con-

The north-western provinces

THIS CHAPTER studies the use of mosaics in the Gallic and Germanic provinces of the Roman Empire. The character of the different regions varied substantially, from the highly urbanised south to the military provinces of the Rhine and the much less densely settled west. The use of mosaics in these regions may be seen as one index of Romanisation: immigrant settlers and elements of the indigenous population adopted the Roman way of life, expressed through public building and a certain style of housing, complete with its comforts and ornament. In the absence of any local tradition for the peculiar and laborious technique of mosaic-laying, it clearly had to be introduced by immigrant craftsmen, in the first place evidently from Italy. Subsequently local workshops were established, which gradually developed their own styles and repertory; these in turn influenced remoter or less Romanised areas of the provinces. At the other end, chronologically, of the Empire, the continuing existence of great rural villas decorated with mosaics in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, long after the barbarian invasions and the collapse of centralised Roman government, also has implications for the maintenance of the social, economic and cultural underpinnings of the society that occupied them.

This chapter, like those that follow it, cannot pretend to offer a complete survey of the art of mosaic throughout the whole of the region studied. It is inevitably selective, based upon groups of material which are either well preserved and well studied, or have especial significance in their own right. Publication in these regions has been good, with Corpora covering the modern countries of Germany and Switzerland (though new finds have been made since their publication), and a project on the provinces of Gaul has been in progress since 1957, and is within sight of completion.¹

I

The southern part of Gaul was one of the earliest and most profoundly Romanised regions of the Roman

Empire. Even before the Roman conquest of the late second and first centuries BC, the Rhône delta had been strongly affected by the civilisation of Massalia (Marseilles) and the other Greek colonies of the coast; the culture of many of the native towns in what became Gallia Narbonensis may be described as Gallo-Greek. It is accordingly here that the earliest examples of mosaics and other pavements are found; they conform very closely to types established in late Republican Italy. Good examples occur at Glanum (Saint-Rémy-de-Provence), in houses dating from the pre-Roman period and the early years of the new province. The earliest are simple pavements related to the Italian *signinum* and *terrazzo* (chip-pavements), or with small pebbles set in white mortar, their sole decoration a scatter of black tesserae. In the House of the Capricorn (IV), pavements of this type were used in the remains of the earliest house, dating from the first, Hellenistic period of the town in the second century BC. This was overlaid by a new house, evidently constructed in the first century BC, and destroyed in its turn by the Roman baths of the first century AD. Here *signinum* and *terrazzo* pavements continued to be used, but were more elaborately decorated, with designs such as maeander and ivy scroll in black and white tesserae. One room contained a circle with a reticulate of lozenges, in white tesserae on *signinum*, and dolphins outlined in white in the outer corners. At its centre was a tessellated panel almost one millimetre square, in black, white, red and ochre: a wave border, four dolphins, and the forepart of a Capricorn, shown as a black silhouette on an ochre ground (figure 74). A similar combination of *terrazzo* and of tessellated panels and borders occurs in another house datable to the first half or the middle of the first century BC, House XII known as the House of Sulla. The patterns, of triangles, maeander and lozenges, are predominantly black-and-white, but small ornamental motifs in green and red appear on a threshold, and an inscription giving the name CO(RNELII)

¹ See bibliography, Parlasca, Gonzenbach, *RecGaulle*.



74 Glanum, House of the Capricorn (1v), *signinum* pavement with mosaic panel at centre. First century BC.

SVLLAE, evidently that of the Romanised owner, was in green tesserae.²

Pavements of *terrazzo* and *signinum*, sometimes combined with small tessellated panels, continued to be used in buildings of the first century AD, at Glanum and elsewhere in the region. But fully tessellated mosaics appeared with increasing frequency, again in types directly derived from Italian work of the late Republic and early Empire. There are plain monochrome pavements of fine workmanship, white or black with contrasting borders; *crustae*-pavements with pieces of marble set against a (usually) black ground, and a growing number of black-and-white geometric designs. Characteristic of this phase, probably running from the first century AD to the first half of the second, are the mosaics of Vasio (Vaison-la-Romaine), in houses such as the House of the Silver Bust and the House of the Messii.³ The compositional sche-

mata are at first uncomplicated designs such as the reticulate of lozenges or honeycomb of hexagons, austere in appearance but marked by excellent execution, which can be paralleled almost identically in Rome and Northern Italy. Slightly more complex compositions became popular in the later part of this period; among them are those derived originally from the decoration of coffered ceilings: grids of crossed bands enclosing square panels, adjacent octagons with small squares between them, stars of eight lozenges forming squares between their points. The motifs that fill the small panels are at first simple and repetitive, but slight coloured touches begin to appear, and occasional elementary figured motifs.⁴

This evolution forms the basis for the appearance of the first authentically Gallo-Roman style of mosaic, around the middle of the second century AD. It is characteristic of workshops operating principally in the valley of the Rhône, but the main centres are further north than the region just considered, principally Lugdunum (Lyons) and Vienna (Vienne); their influence also spread further afield, into the Alpine regions and the Northern Gallic provinces. Their main period of operation is thought to run from the mid-second to the early third century; very little survives in this region from the later Empire.⁵ Their production is marked by a preference for a limited number of geometric compositions, especially those listed in the previous paragraph, which cover the field with a repetitive structure leaving small panels available for ornament. The basic schemata are usually executed in black-and-white, but increasing richness is found both in the selection of motifs for the small panels and in their colouring. Two features which may be considered characteristic are the so-called 'multiple decor' designs, and the use of a rich floral and vegetal ornament; they also often include figured scenes and motifs, in contrast to the almost entirely non-figural character of previous Gallic mosaics.⁶

ibid. (cit.n.2), 223 n.157, for doubts about Lassus' dating and the questionable value for chronological purposes of the parallels with mosaics in Rome.

⁴ For the general development, see *RecGaulle* III.1, 16-19; cf. H. Lavagne, 'Trois mosaïques inédites de Vaison-la-Romaine et de Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux', *RANarb* 10, 1977, 171-88.

⁵ The majority of the mosaics found at Lyons are placed by Stern between AD 170 and 230: *RecGaulle* II.1, 12-16. For Vienne, cf. below, n.9.

⁶ H. Stern, 'Ateliers de mosaïstes rhodaniens d'époque gallo-romaine', *CMGR* 1, 233-43; J. Lancha, *Mos. géom.*; Lancha, 'L'influence des ateliers de mosaïstes d'Aquilée et de la vallée du Pô dans la vallée du Rhône', *AAAd* 8, 1975, 59-72, on the north Italian derivation of this style.

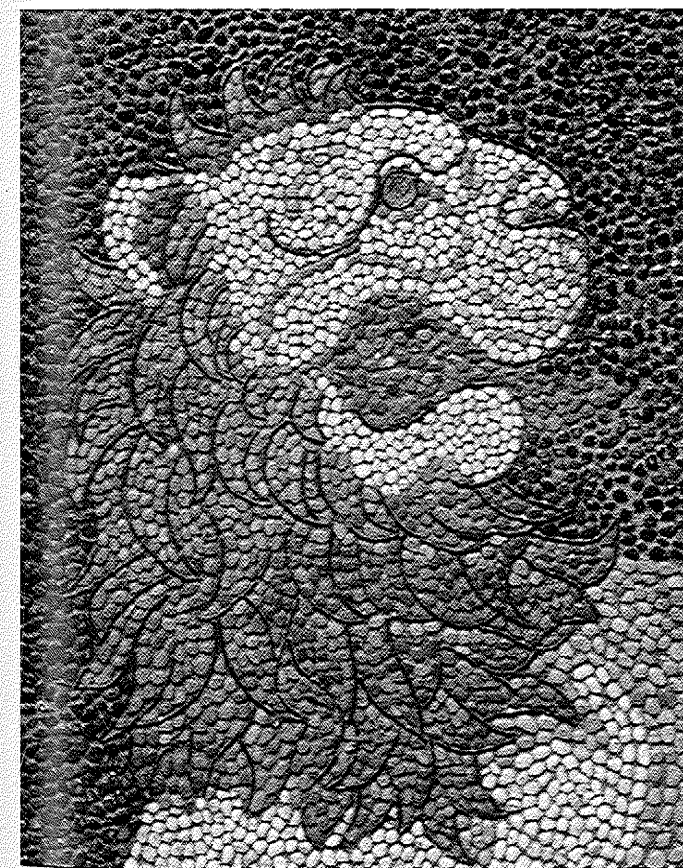


above

1 Eretria, House of the Mosaics, Nereid panel from threshold. 1.57 m × 0.96 m. Mid-fourth century BC.

left

2 Pella, House 1.1, Lion Hunt, detail of lion's head. Pella Museum. Late fourth century BC.



² H. Rolland, *Fouilles de Glanum (Saint-Rémy-de-Provence)* (Gallia suppl.1, Paris 1946), 65-71, 118-28; Rolland, 'Observations sur les mosaïques de Glanum', *ArchEspArq* 25, 1952, 3-14; H. Lavagne, *Dossiers de l'Archéologie* 140, July-August 1989, 58-9. Rolland's division into periods and his dates for them have been questioned, though the overall pattern of development is probably correct: see C. Goudineau, *Les fouilles de la Maison au Dauphin. Recherches sur la romanisation de Vaison-la-Romaine* (Gallia suppl.37, Paris 1979), 224 n.161. For the date of the House of Sulla, see H. Lavagne, 'Mosaïques de Ligurie et Narbonnaise: similitudes, parentés, influences', in *Atti del Convegno 'Studi Lunensi e prospettive sull'Occidente romano'*, Lerici 1985 (1987), 383-4, with refs.

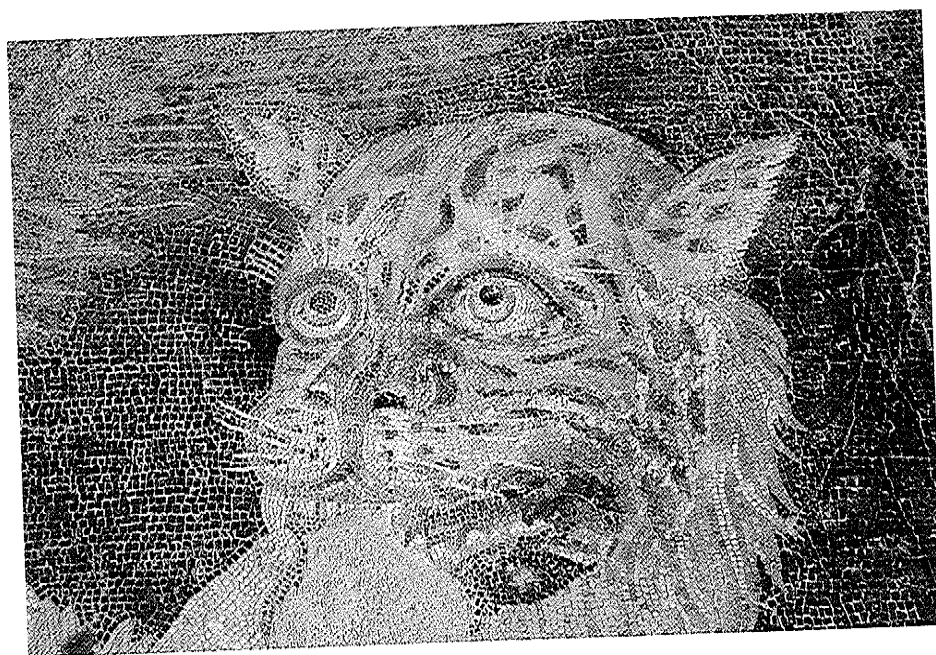
³ J. Lassus, 'Remarques sur les mosaïques de Vaison-la-Romaine (1)', *Gallia* 28, 1970, 35-66; (11), *Gallia* 29, 1971, 45-72; but see Goudineau,



3 Pella, House 1.1, Lion Hunt, detail of hunter. Pella Museum.
Late fourth century BC.

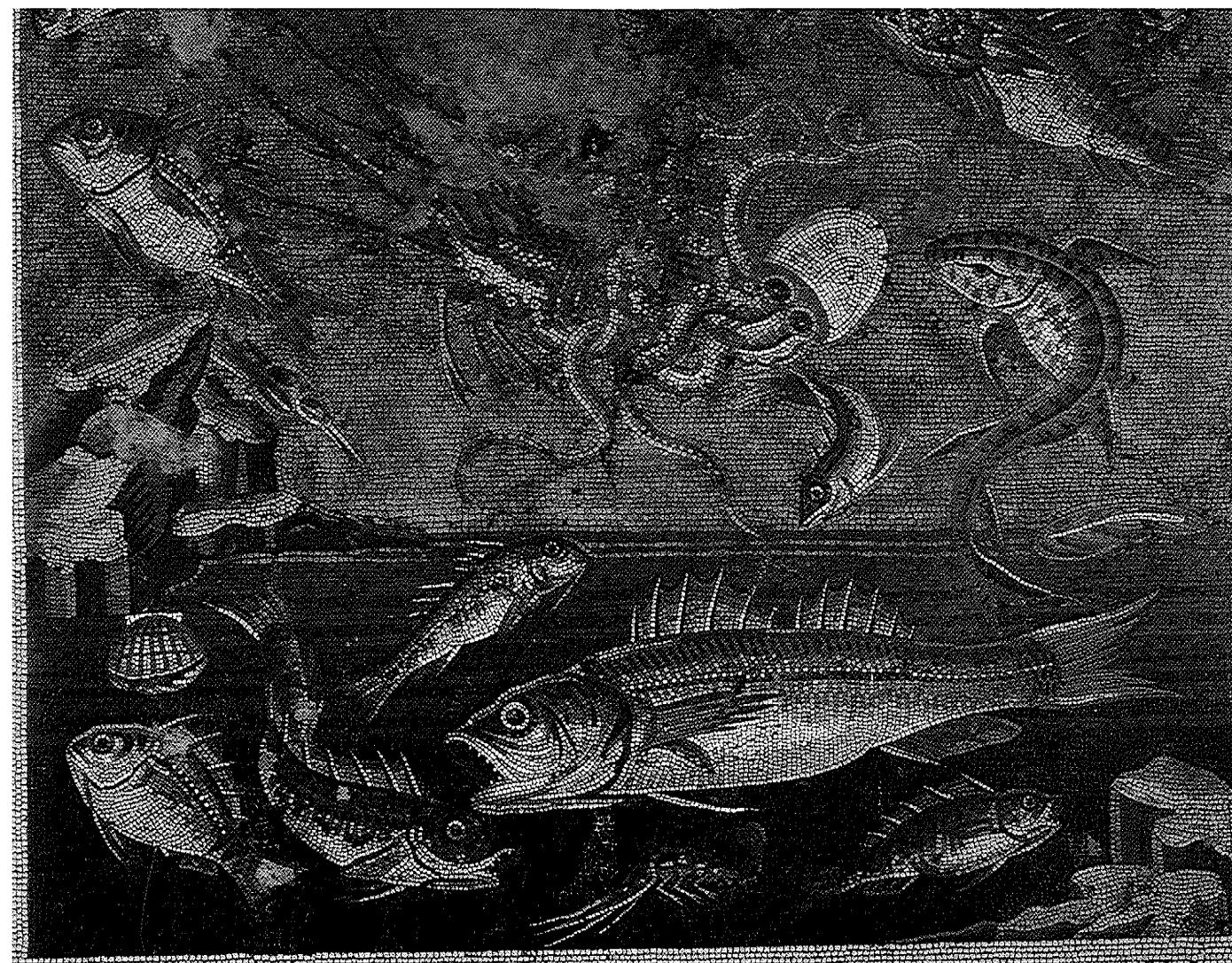


4 Thmuis, Sophilos Mosaic, central panel with female bust.
Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria. Probably first half of the
second century BC.



left
5 Delos, House of Dionysus, *emblem* with tiger-rider, detail of tiger. c. 130–88 B.C.

below
6 Pompeii VI 12, 2, House of the Faun, Alexander Mosaic, detail of Darius. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. End of the second century B.C.

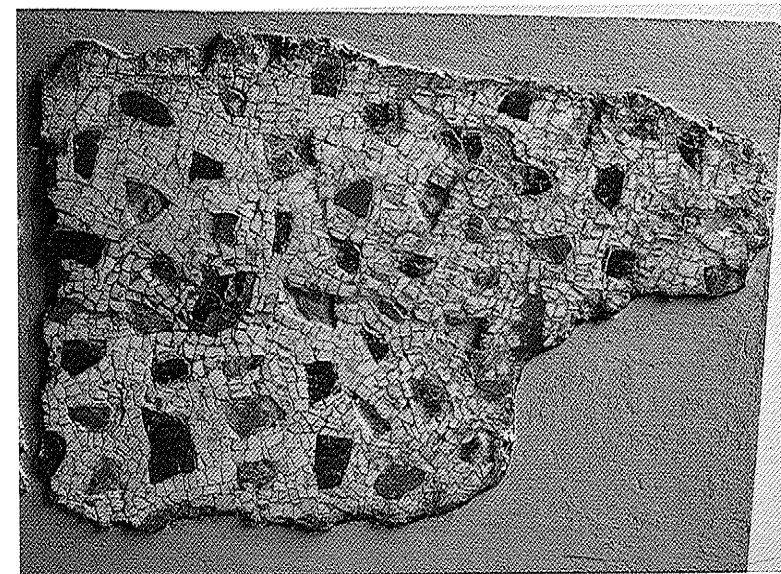


7 Pompeii VI 12, 2, House of the Faun, Marine Scene, detail. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. End of the second century B.C.



8 Pompeii vi 15, 14, portrait of woman. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. 0.205 m × 0.255 m. Probably late first century BC to early first century AD.

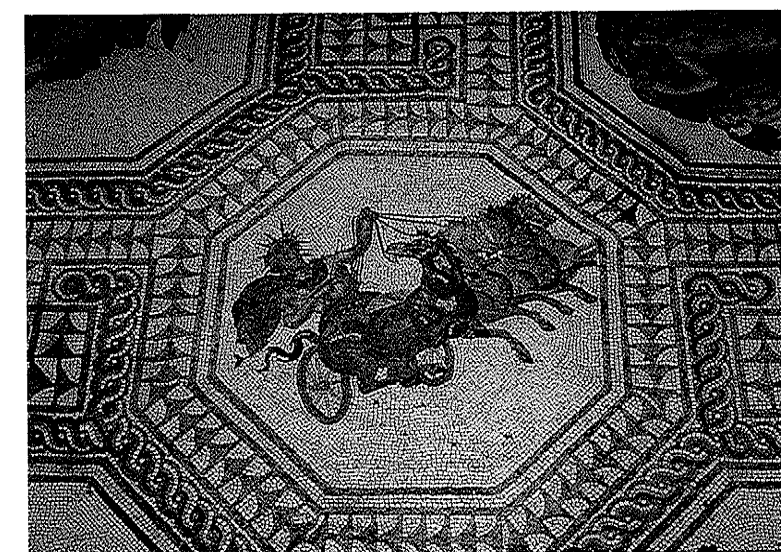
9 Praeneste, Sanctuary of Fortuna, *crustae*-pavement. Probably late second century BC.

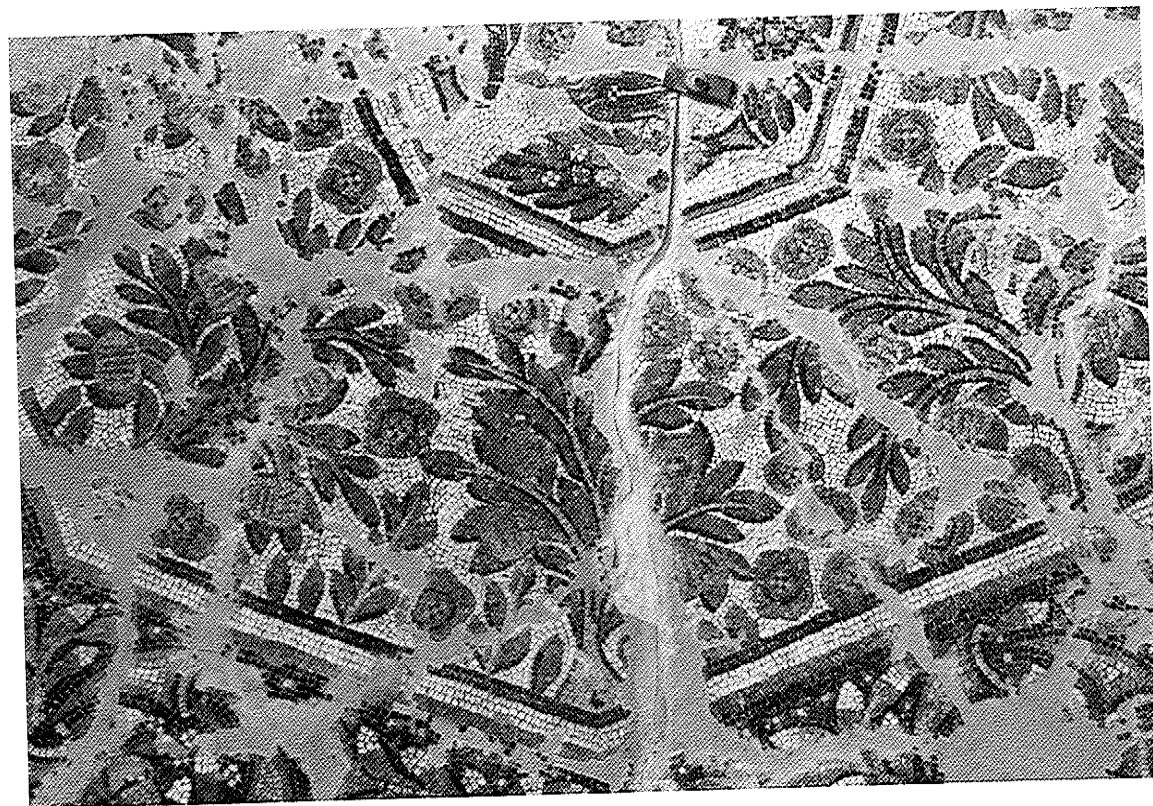


10 Vienne, floral mosaic. Surviving portion 2.48 m × 1.83 m. Late second to early third century AD.



11 Orbe, mosaic of planetary deities, detail showing chariot of the Sun-god. Early third century AD.

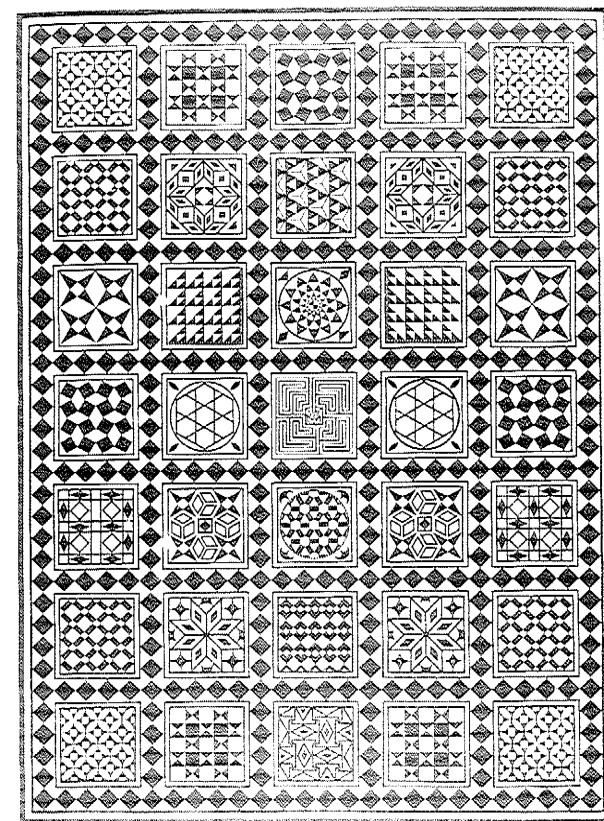




12 Valence-sur-Baise (Gers), vine pavement, detail of band of fruit trees. Probably late fourth to fifth century AD.



13 Loupian, Villa, apse π , detail of scroll. Probably early fifth century AD.



75 Ouzouër-sur-Trézée, multiple decor mosaic, drawing. Château du Pont-Chevron, Ouzouër-sur-Trézée. Originally c.8.40 m $\times$ 6.50 m. Probably second half of the second century AD.



76 Ouzouër-sur-Trézée, mosaic with head of Ocean. Château du Pont-Chevron, Ouzouër-sur-Trézée. Sides of central hexagon c.0.55 m.

The multiple decor pavements are a development of the grid compositions that derived from coffered ceilings: bands crossing at right angles, forming square panels between them. Whereas in earlier mosaics these panels had been filled with simple repetitive motifs, the new style introduced an extraordinarily wide range of filling ornaments; among them are patterns of considerable complexity, many of which are themselves also used on a larger scale as all-over compositions. In the most sophisticated examples strict rules govern the structure and distribution of these ornaments: square and circular designs alternate, for example, or identical designs are repeated according to a certain rhythm.⁷ A mosaic found at Ouzouër-sur-Trézée (Loiret), in Gallia Lugdunensis, gives an excellent example of the more severe, and typologically earlier, form of such pavements (figure 75). It is executed entirely in black-and-white. Bands decorated with a row of tangent oblique squares form a grid of square panels, seven rows of five. Within these are seventeen different designs, six of them unique, the rest repeated one or more times; identical pairs are repeated on either side of the central axis. Four circular motifs are set in the panels surrounding the central square, which contains a labyrinth;

all the rest are square. The complex abstract design of this pavement contrasts with a neighbouring mosaic from the same site (figure 76). This uses a compositional scheme of stars of lozenges enclosing hexagons between them, also black-and-white and designed with the utmost simplicity, without complex filling motifs. On the other hand, a larger hexagon in the centre is polychrome; it shows a powerful head of the god Ocean. It is clearly of different workmanship from the rest of the pavement, using much smaller tesserae, many of glass, and very rich colouring, but can be shown to have been executed *in situ*.⁸

The greatest number of mosaics of this type have been found at Vienna (Vienne), where a substantial area of the ancient town has remained free of later buildings, especially in the two suburbs of Sainte-Colombe and Saint-Romain-en-Gal. Although earlier and simpler pavement

⁷ Lancha, *Mos. géom.* 17–56.

⁸ H. Stern, 'Mosaïques de Pont-Chevron près d'Ouzouër-sur-Trézée', *Gallia* 25, 1967, 49–65; *RecGaulle* 11.3, 93–102, nos. 467–8, pls. LXVIII–LXXVII. Stern proposes a date of the mid to third quarter of the second century, which seems plausible; Darmon suggests the Severan period, but without any solid arguments (*RecGaulle* 11.3, 99, 102).

types are found in the city, the height of mosaic production here may be placed between the mid-second and the early third century; it apparently ceased altogether around AD 225. The more advanced form of multiple decor pavement may be illustrated by the mosaic from Vienne of the Drunkenness of Hercules, for which Lancha proposes a date in the last quarter of the second century AD⁹ (figure 77). This consisted originally of nine rows of five panels; restoration has reduced this to eight rows of three. These were divided by a grid of two rows of oblique squares, in a way similar to the Ouzouër-sur-Trézée mosaic; but the decoration of the individual compartments is infinitely richer and more varied. No two panels are identical, and the whole decorative repertory of the Rhône workshops is drawn upon to provide patterns. Square and circular designs alternate; some occupy the whole space of the compartment, others have their own interior borders, arranged in balanced though not identical pairs. Some of the designs are black-and-white, others richly polychrome; the more elaborate are concentrated around the central axis, simpler effects used in the outer rows. Floral elements are used, though with restraint: a polychrome band of stylised floral calyxes ran across the threshold, and several of the interior borders consist of vegetal elements. Figures also play a considerable part. Several of the compartments contained figured motifs, among them Dionysiac figures, fish, birds, and a miniature honeycomb of hexagons with the busts of the seven planetary deities; and the angles around the circular designs are filled with a variety of small figured motifs. The main figured scene occupies a panel larger than the rest, overlapping the bands of the grid; it shows Hercules overcome by wine, surrounded and supported by members of the Dionysiac *thiasos*, while Dionysus himself watches from a rocky elevation in the background. The mortar supporting this panel appears to have been of a different quality from that of the rest of the mosaic, suggesting that it may have been a real (disguised) *emblema*, brought ready-made from outside. The richness of the rest of the pavement, however, prevents the central panel from dominating as traditional *emblemata* had done, or as the panel with Ocean at Ouzouër-sur-Trézée still does; it acts merely as a slightly more emphatic focus in a lavishly decorated whole.

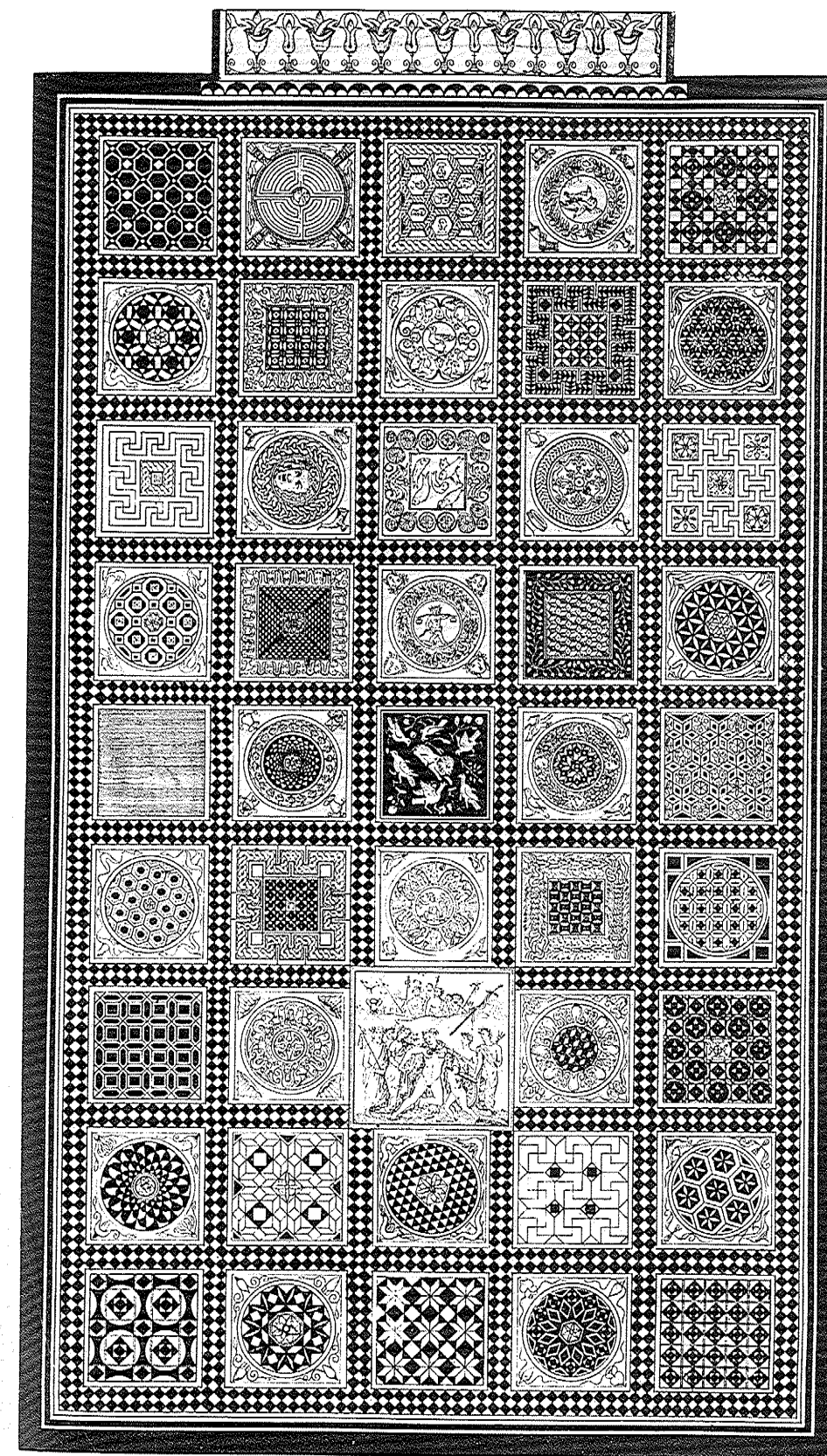
⁹ *RecGaule* III.2, 106–16, no.306, pls.XI–XLIV; H. Stern, 'Deux mosaïques de Vienne (Isère)', *Mon Piot* 56, 1969, 13–43. For the chronological problems of these pavements, see also H. Lavagne, 'Dessin inédit d'une mosaïque de Vienne (Isère)', *Gallia* 37, 1979, 101–17 (esp.112–17).

The second principal characteristic of the Rhône style of mosaics, the use of floral and vegetal elements, may also be illustrated by mosaics from Vienna. One mosaic from Vienne itself has a compositional scheme of tangent octagons with small squares between them, outlined very simply with black and red fillets (plate 10). The octagons contain stylised flowers, nine types repeated in oblique rows across the pavement; the colours are ochre, brick, and grey. Another, from Saint-Romain-en-Gal, is dated archaeologically to the first quarter of the third century (figure 78). It has a more complex scheme: large hexagons, outlined in guilloché, are separated by bands consisting of stars of lozenges with small hexagons between them. Both the small and the large hexagons contain stylised flowers of rich polychromy and great variety, hardly any two identical. The flowers used in these mosaics are not naturalistic; they are constructed on geometric principles, with repeated elements, and carefully adapted to the shape of the frame in which they are set. However, they show a remarkable wealth of invention in the combinations of elements; Lancha lists over 150 variants from Vienne alone.¹⁰

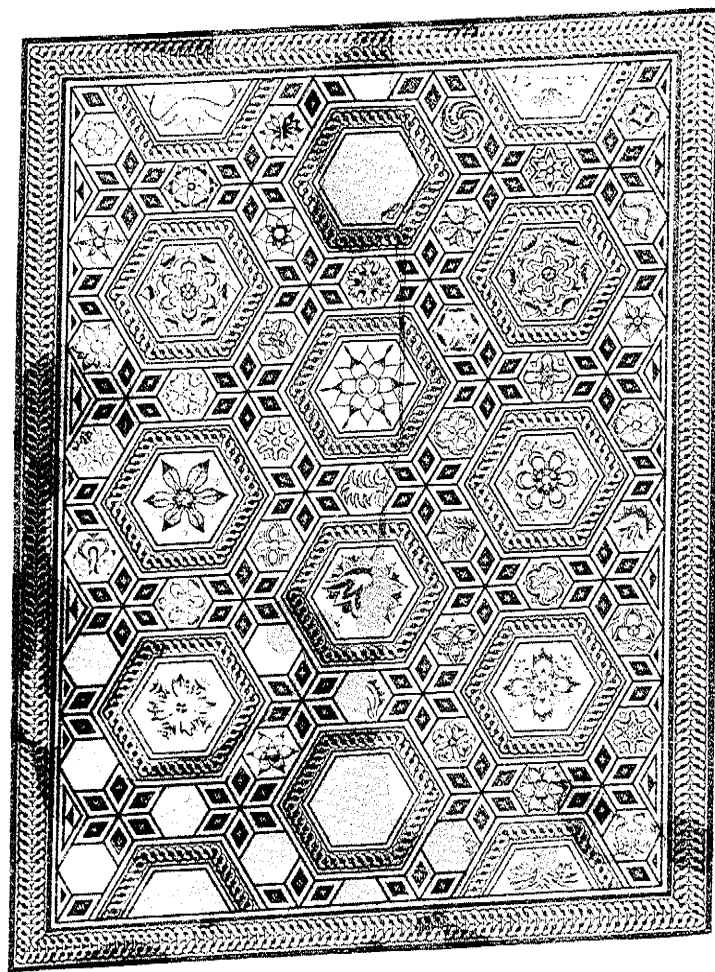
In other products of the Rhône workshops, figured elements are no longer confined to individual and isolated panels; instead, all the principal compartments in the composition are filled with a coherent series of related figures or scenes. The best example of this is the Rustic Calendar from Saint-Romain-en-Gal¹¹ (figure 79). This has a grid of panels, originally forty, of which twenty-seven survive; they are framed by bands of guilloché, a scroll forms the border, the whole is polychrome. Apart from four panels with vegetal motifs, each contains a separate figured scene. In the centre, the four Seasons ride upon appropriate beasts; all around are activities characteristic of the season. A few show religious ceremonies, but the majority illustrate agricultural activities. They are probably copied from earlier, Italian prototypes, and show little that is specifically Gallic; but they illustrate many otherwise unexampled details of everyday rural life, such as the peasants clad in typical hooded cloaks, carrying a tray of manure from a hut, the men weaving baskets and grafting trees, or the baker extracting bread from an oven with a long-handled shovel (figure 80). The style

¹⁰ *RecGaule* III.2, 141–3, no.322, pls.LXII–LXIII; *ibid.*, 274–82, no.396, pls.CXXXIIIc, CLV–CLXIII; J. Lancha, 'Florilège viennois', *Homages Stern*, 245–51, pls.CLIII–CLXIX.

¹¹ *RecGaule* III.2, 208–25, no.368, pls.CVIII–CXXIII, with references to earlier literature.



77 Vienne, multiple decor mosaic with central panel showing Drunkenness of Hercules; drawing of original state. Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-romaine, Lyon. Originally c.10.33 m × 6 m. Probably late second century AD.



78 Saint-Romain-en-Gal, mosaic with floral motifs in hexagons. c.3.68 m × 4.78 m. First quarter of the third century AD.

suggests that this is one of the latest products of the Vienna workshops, shortly before they apparently ceased to operate around AD 225.

Not all the mosaics of Vienna conform to the standardised schemes listed above. In the mosaic of Lycurgus and the vine from Sainte-Colombe, a rectangular room was completely covered with scrolls of vine growing from the sides and corners, and unfolding freely in shades of yellow and beige against a dark green ground (figure 81). In the centre is the powerful figure of Lycurgus, brandishing his axe, and entwined in the tendrils of the vine which will choke him. On one side of the room was an apse, in which Dionysus and members of his *thiasos* are

represented, reclining on cushions drinking and making merry, while they watch the struggles of Lycurgus in the main part of the room. The shape of the room is that of a dining-room where a semi-circular couch would be set in the apse, a type popular in the later Empire; the host and his guests would have reclined immediately above the figures of the Dionysiac banqueters, and would themselves have watched entertainment offered in the main part of the room. This correspondence of function and decoration is most unusual; so, in Gaul, is the use of a free vegetal design as the basis of the composition. Dating on the basis of style is accordingly almost impossible, but the apparent evidence that the houses in this region of Vienna were abandoned in the second quarter of the third century should provide a *terminus ante quem*.¹²

II

The Swiss mosaics studied by Victorine von Gonzenbach do not add very much that is new to the characteristics observed in southern and central Gaul; but the exemplary nature of their publication makes it possible to follow the development in this area particularly clearly.¹³ Here too the earliest pavements are of *terrazzo* and *signinum* from the first half of the first century AD, followed by black-and-white mosaics with simple linear patterns in the second half. Mosaics were comparatively rare at this date, confined to Roman colonies and military settlements, and the derivation is clearly from Italian workshops. From the mid-second century the use of mosaic became more common, in country villas as well as in the towns; and local coloured stones began to be used. Figured motifs were introduced for the central compartment of a centralised composition or for panels and medallions in all-over patterns; vegetal elements, as filling motifs or borders, also became common. There is an evident dependence in both repertory and composition upon the workshops of southern and central Gaul, especially Lugdunum and Vienna; the Swiss workshops show few original features of their own. The main period

of production dates between c. AD 175–235, and is marked by ever greater richness and complexity. Imported marbles and glass were used increasingly, allowing a wider range of colours; figured scenes became steadily more common. One striking aspect of the style of the late Severan period is the liking for three-dimensional effects, of a sort hardly seen since the late Hellenistic period: patterns derived from architecture were popular, and true illusionistic designs such as the perspective maeander came back into use. Also characteristic of this period is the use of black backgrounds, for individual motifs or for an entire floor. Production fell off with the German invasions of the 230s; it continued in large towns such as Aventicum (Avenches) and Augusta Raurica (Augst), to vanish when they were wiped out by the further invasions of the 260s–70s. To the best of our present knowledge, no mosaics in Switzerland are to be placed later than this.

The richest single group of mosaics are those of the villa at Orbe, north of Lausanne. Eight mosaics were found here, apparently contemporary, and placed by von Gonzenbach in the first quarter of the third century; several use three-dimensional effects. Of the four figured mosaics, the best preserved is the Mosaic of the Planetary Deities (figure 82; plate 11). Rows of octagons cover the pavement; they are framed in bands of guilloche and triangles, which fill the spaces between the octagons with a swastika maeander. Seven of the octagons contain the gods of the planets, some enthroned between winged supporters, others driving chariots across the sky. In the remaining octagons are Ganymede, Narcissus, and pairs of Tritons and Nereids; since Venus is placed in the centre, the unifying theme may be the power of love. The octagons with their brightly coloured figures, strongly modelled in light and shade, create the effect of openings, set like coffers in a ceiling into the heavy ornamental pattern. The three-dimensional illusion is negated, however, by the border, which, unusually, has a figured frieze: hunting scenes, with animals and men running against a plain white ground.¹⁴ A second mosaic at Orbe also has a figured frieze, with rustic scenes on a considerably larger scale: oxen pull a laden wagon, a man carries equipment for catching birds; small trees separate them, otherwise the ground is plain.¹⁵ Big figured scenes of this sort, treated two-dimensionally, are rare in the northern provinces; occasional examples like this show that the mosaicists, and their patrons, were not unaware of their possibilities.

III

The more northerly provinces of Gaul at first followed in the same path as the south. But already by the second century AD the economic and political centre of gravity was shifting to another region: the Rhineland and the area behind it, especially the Mosel valley. Although technically divided between the two German provinces and Gallia Belgica, the region with its two great cities of Augusta Treverorum (Trier) and Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippensium (Cologne) may be considered together.

In the earlier Empire the development here is generally similar to that in the south, with black-and-white mosaics and other pavements of Italian derivation, though comparatively little survives. The influence of the Rhône workshops was felt here during their most productive period of the mid- and late second century; but neither the multiple decor pavements nor the use of floral elements are frequent in this region. The most productive and most characteristic period here began at the end of the second century, and lasted until the German invasions which devastated the area in the 260s and 270s. Crowded ornamental compositions are popular, especially those in which the whole surface is divided by continuous bands of guilloche into a series of smaller compartments. These often contain figured motifs and groups, more common here than in many other regions of Gaul. Figures may be separated, one to a compartment, or reduced to isolated busts; other mosaics place groups of two or three within a single compartment, sometimes with minimal allusions to their setting; all-over figured scenes are very rare. In the earlier part of this period the ornamental structure is clear, and a balance is kept between figures and ornament; in the later examples, the ornament becomes ever denser and more complex.¹⁶

The range of subject-matter found in these figured mosaics is also characteristic. Mythological scenes are comparatively rare, with the exception of the special case of Dionysus and his followers, but several allude to the literary life through the figures of philosophers and poets, or of Muses. One from Trier, for instance, shows a

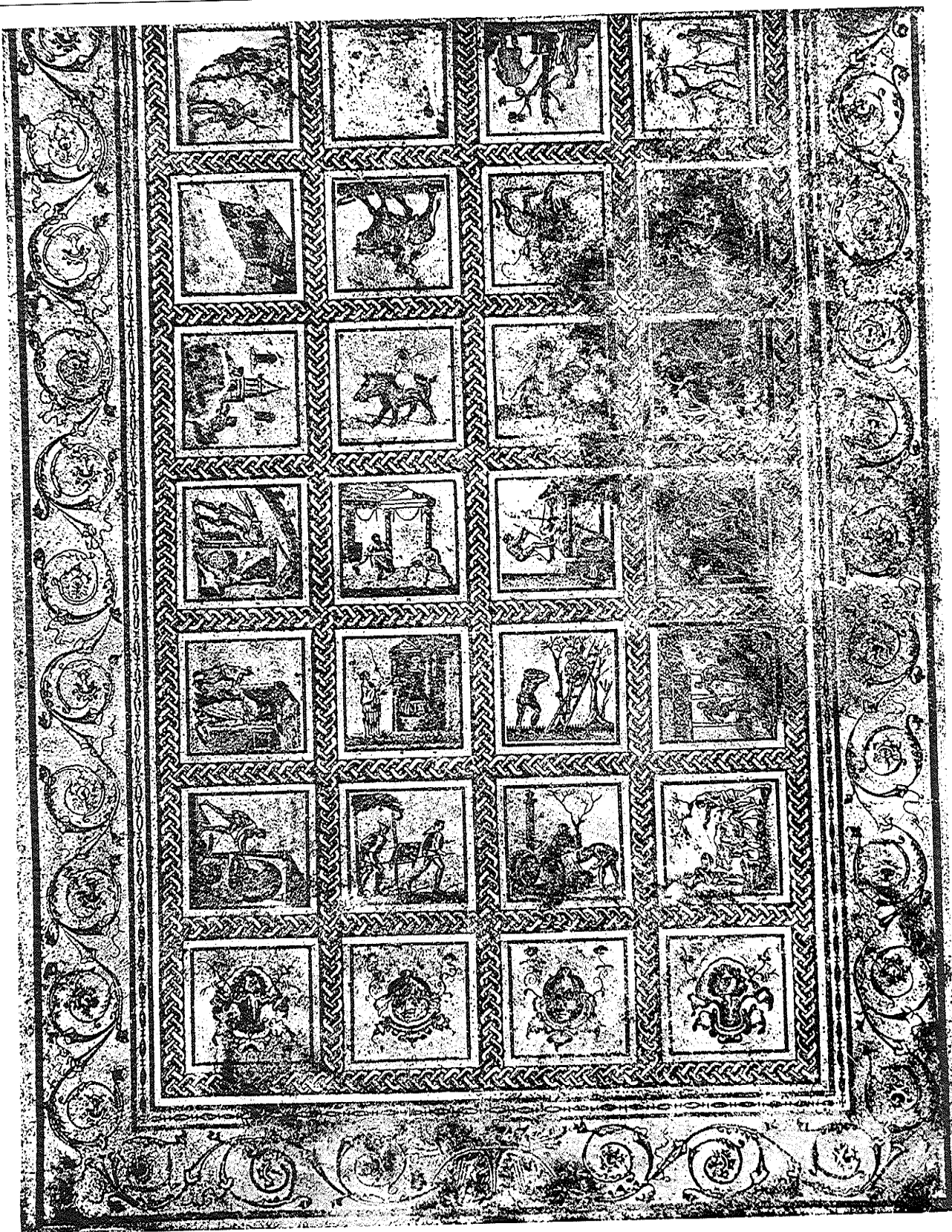
¹² *RecGaule* 111.2, 157–63, no.331, pls.LXXVII–LXXXI; Lancha, *Mos. géom.*, 185–7. Lancha proposes a date c.175–200, which seems to me too early. The mosaic was divided into sections when it was lifted, but the original design has been reconstituted in the drawings of R. Prudhomme.

¹³ Gonzenbach, *passim*, esp.291–301, 331–6; Gonzenbach, 'Die römischen

¹⁴ Gonzenbach 184–92, no.95.v, pls.60–7. Other mosaics from Orbe *ibid.* 173–98.

¹⁵ Gonzenbach 174–7, no.95.11, pls.49–53; the surviving fragment, one side of a frieze which evidently continued down at least one other side, measured 6.25 m × 2.28 m.

¹⁶ For the general development, cf. Parlasca 109–28; G. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Hofkunst in der Provinz? Zur Denkmälerüberlieferung aus der Zeit des gallischen Sonderreichs', *BjB* 184, 1984, 67–96.



79 Saint-Romain-en-Gal, Rustic Calendar, general view. Musée des Antiquités nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Surviving portion 4.34 m × 5.66 m. First quarter of the third century AD.

philosopher, evidently Anaximander, seated beside a sundial; one from Cologne has philosophers and poets identified by name, in Greek: Diogenes, Kleoboulos, Socrates, Cheilon, Sophocles.¹⁷ Others draw upon the amphitheatre and circus for their material: charioteers are especially popular in Trier.¹⁸

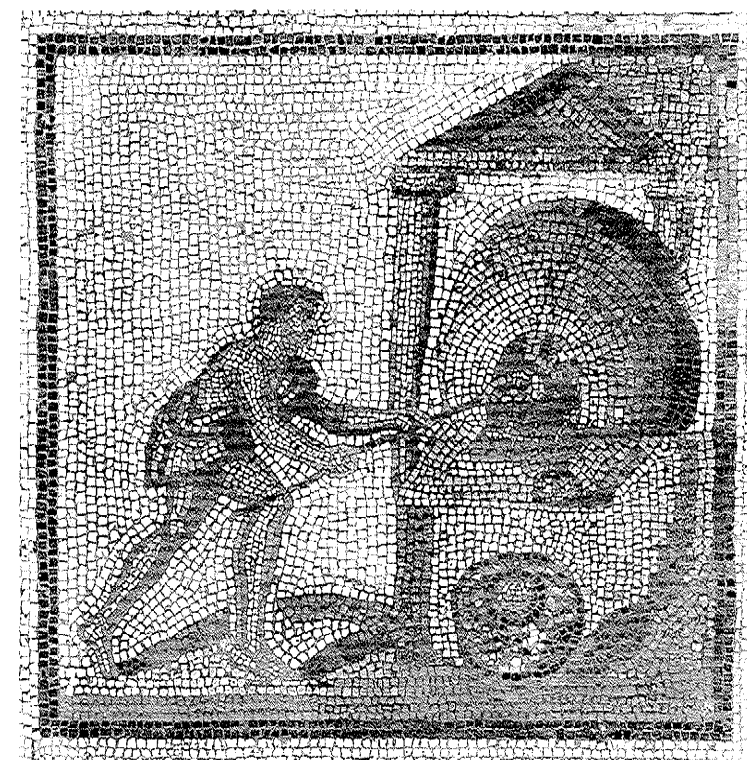
One of the finest products of the Rhineland workshops is the Dionysiac mosaic found next to the Cathedral at Cologne¹⁹ (figure 83). The field is covered with squares of guilloche interlaced to form octagons; smaller squares are set on their points, while the spaces between are occupied by pairs of lozenges. Further borders, of meander and dentils, outline these compartments. Figures occupy the octagons and squares, and the segments of these along the edge, thirty-one panels in all. At the centre a larger compartment is given special emphasis by an additional guilloche border, and shows Dionysus leaning on a satyr; all the rest contain Dionysiac figures and emblems of his cult. There is a contrast between the richly ornamented framework and the lightness of the figured panels, where the figures stand out against a plain ground whose white tesserae are set in an imbrication pattern. The contrast extends to the colouring: bright, variegated tones, with considerable use of glass in the figures, a more muted range in the frames. The figures themselves are classical in form, well proportioned and carefully modelled. Despite controversy over the date, it is probably to be placed in the late Severan period, around AD 220.²⁰

Similar characteristics, but in a more advanced form, are to be seen on the amphitheatre mosaic which decorated the huge main room of a villa at Nennig, in the upper Mosel valley, probably from the second quarter of the third century²¹ (figure 84). Apart from narrow bands of black-and-white pattern at the sides, the whole space is occupied by a continuous network of guilloche which also forms the border (unlike the Cologne mosaic, where the border patterns are distinct). This network outlines an

¹⁷ Parlasca 29, pls.A.1, 28.2 (Anaximander); 80-2, pls.80-2 (Cologne philosophers). A recent find at Vichten, in Luxemburg, has the Muses together with Homer: J.-C. Muller, J. Krier, *Voilà Luxembourg* 7, 1995, 76-8.

¹⁸ Charioteers: Parlasca 24-7, pls.2.1, 25, 26.3; W. Reusch, 'Wandmalereien und Mosaikboden eines Peristylhauses im Bereich der Trierer Kaiserthermen', *TrZ* 29, 1966, 216-22, pls.B, 32-6. G. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Neue römische Mosaiken in Deutschland. Beiträge zur Chronologie des 3. Jahrhunderts', *CMGR* III, 340-4.

¹⁹ Parlasca 75-9, pls.66-79; F. Fremersdorf, *Das römische Haus mit dem Dionysos-Mosaik vor dem Südpfortal des Kölner Domes* (Berlin 1956); H.-G. Horn, *Mysteriensymbolik auf dem Kölner Dionysosmosaik*



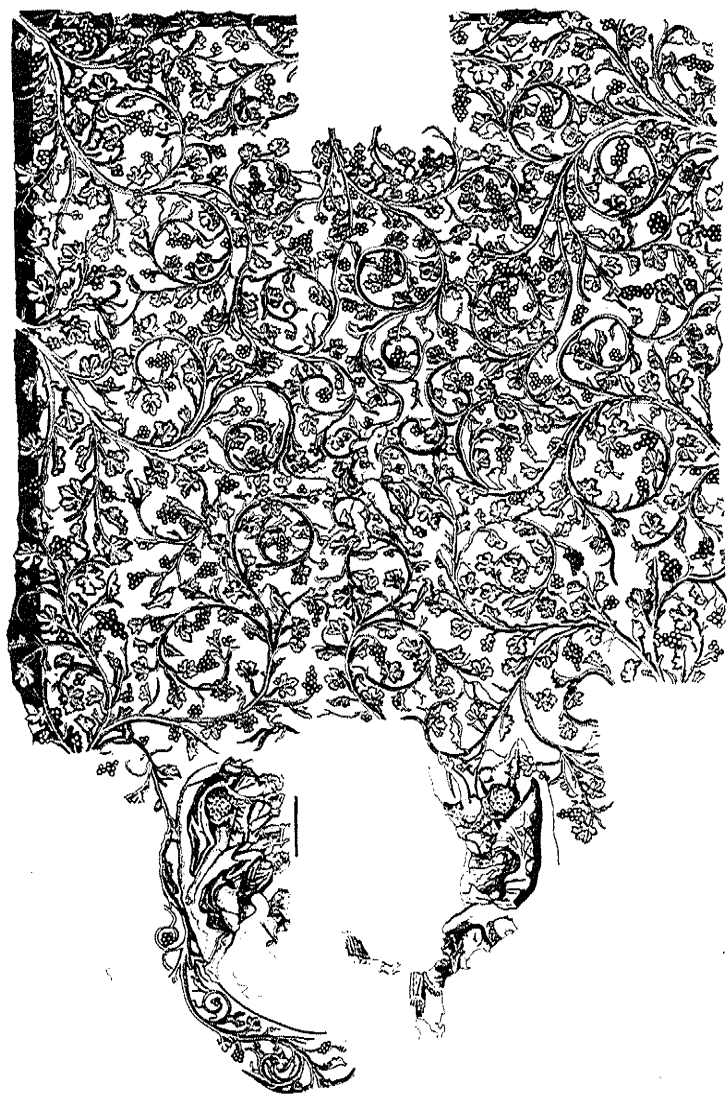
80 Saint-Romain-en-Gal, Rustic Calendar, detail showing baker at bread oven. Panel 0.52 m square.

elaborate composition of alternating octagons and crosses, with pairs of lozenges in the angles, and two big squares in the centre. Only the octagons and one of the big squares (the other contained a fountain basin) are here occupied by figures; the other parts of the design contain ornamental motifs. Although at first glance the Nennig mosaic has much in common with the Cologne Dionysus, the two floors produce a very different effect. This is partly the result of the changed proportion of figured and ornamental designs: the dominating feature at Nennig is the heavy, crowded structure, emphasised by the continuously interwoven lines of guilloche. To this is added the multiplicity of borders in the compartments: all are outlined by at least one internal border, often more, of meander, dentils, or zigzags, while the octagons have

(Bonn, 1972). Horn's interpretation of the mosaic in the light of the Dionysiac Mysteries has been challenged: cf. A. Geyer, *Das Problem des Realitätsbezuges in der dionysischen Bildkunst der Kaiserzeit* (Würzburg 1977), 94-113.

²⁰ For a rejection of the supposed archaeological evidence for a date at the end of the third century, and renewed stylistic arguments for the date c.220 advanced by Parlasca, cf. Hellenkemper Salies, *CMGR* III, 345-7.

²¹ Parlasca 35-8, pls.36-9. For the date cf. Parlasca, 'Neues zur Chronologie der römischen Mosaiken in Deutschland', *CMGR* I, 79-80; a coin of AD 192 was found in the bedding, whose state of wear suggests it had been in use for between twenty-five and sixty years.

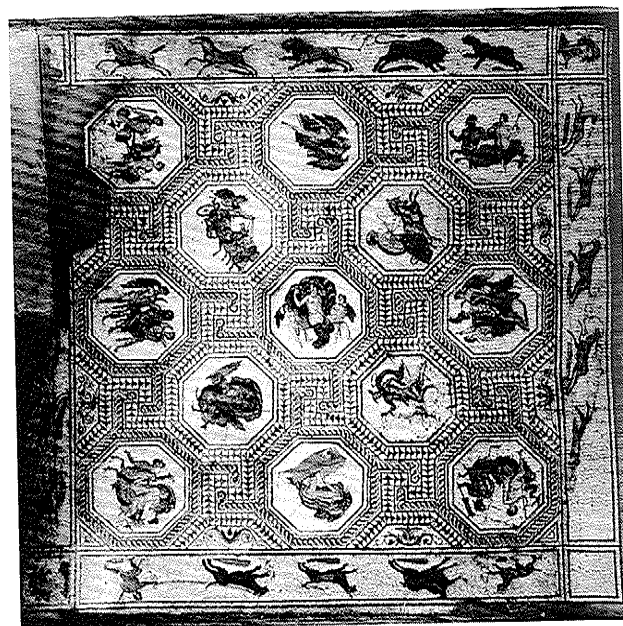


81 Vienne, Sainte-Colombe, Lycurgus and the vine, reconstruction drawing. Fragments in Musée Lapidaire, Vienne. Originally 7 m × 5.15 m. Probably late second to early third century AD.

an independent border of guilloche within the main outline. The design of the crosses and lozenges also creates an almost three-dimensional effect: although no actual illusionistic motifs are used, the proliferation of borders produces an illusion of depth, like the coffers of a ceiling.

Figures from the amphitheatre occupy the larger compartments: pairs of gladiators, *venatores* (hunters) attacking animals. One shows the water-organ played in the arena, while a man blows on a long horn; in another a lion is bodily led away by its trainer from the corpse of a wild

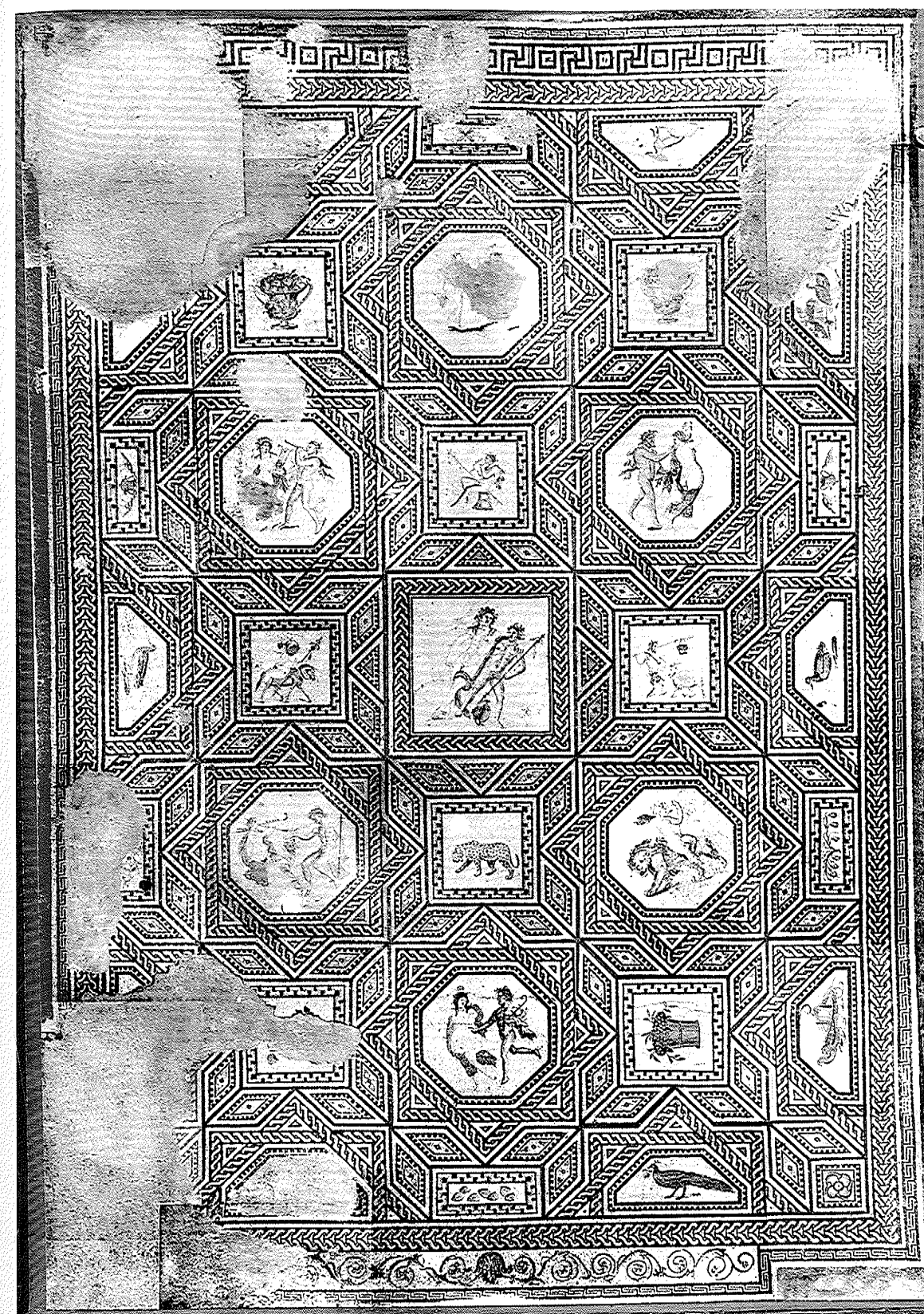
²² Parlasca 56–7, pls. 54–5, D–E; J. Moreau, *Das Trierer Kornmarktmosaik* (*Monumenta Artis Romanae* II, Cologne 1960).



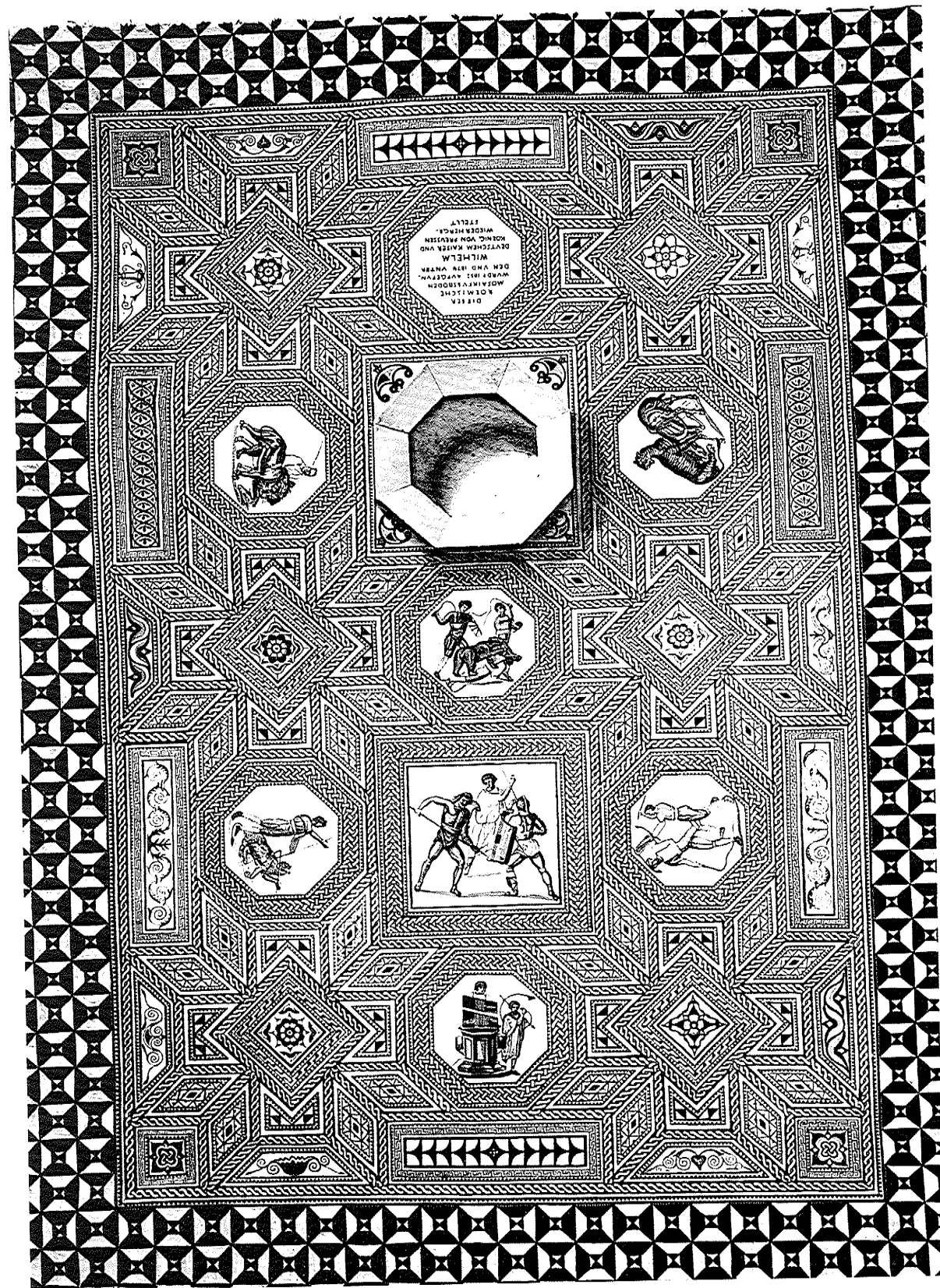
82 Orbe, Mosaic of the Planetary Deities. 4.60 m × 4.25 m. Early third century AD.

ass. As with other amphitheatre scenes on mosaics, close attention is paid to details of costume and equipment: the fighters here, for instance, are dressed quite differently from those in similar scenes in Italy or North Africa, with close-fitting knee-breeches and striped leggings. The figures themselves are much heavier and less classical than those on the Cologne Dionysus: probably less the result of chronological difference than of the contrast between subjects taken from the traditional repertory and those with more contemporary subject-matter. There is no indication of setting, although the figures cast shadows.

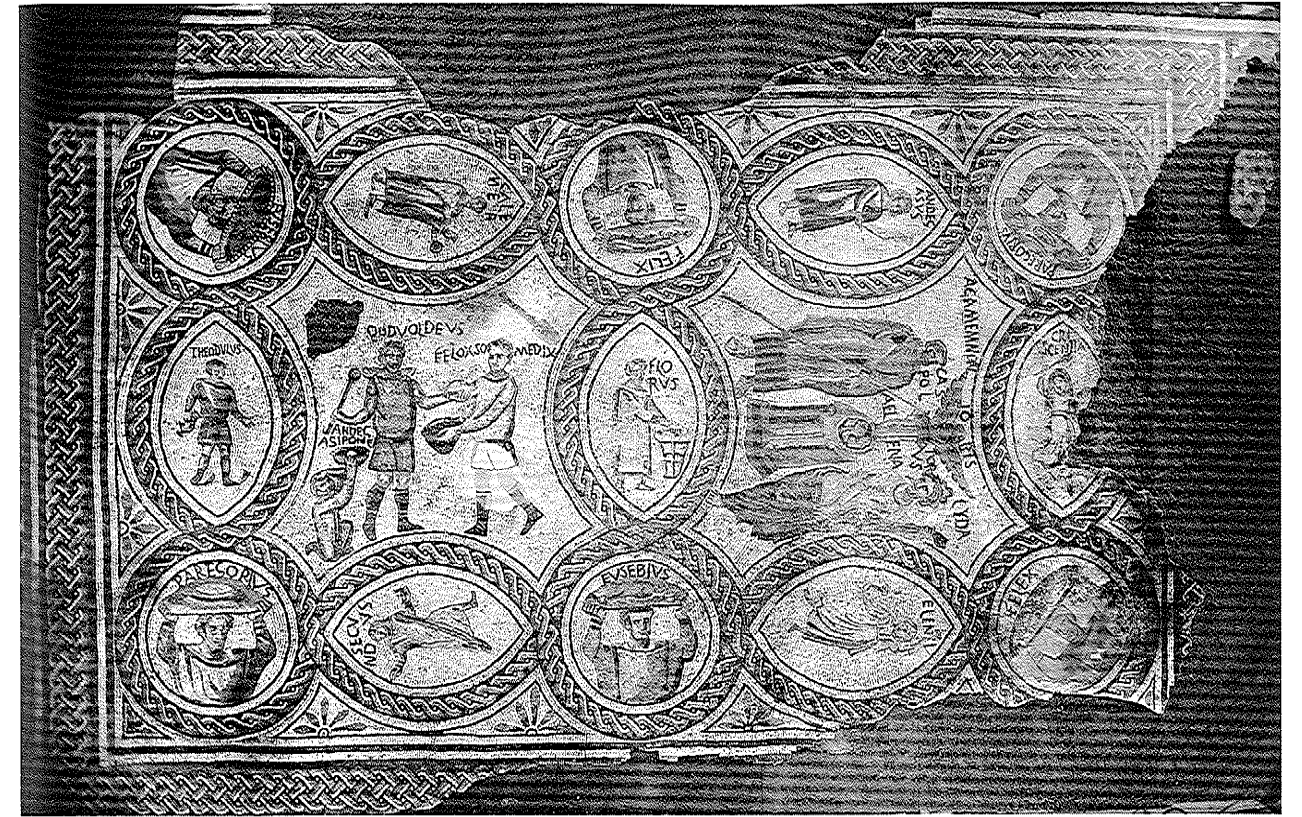
The troubles of the late third century appear to have put an end to the production of mosaics in most of this region; but they continued to be produced in and around Augusta Treverorum, which enjoyed a period of great prosperity as an imperial residence during the fourth century AD. Not enough survives from this period to permit a clear stylistic characterisation; but the extreme complexity of the third-century structures appears to have been abandoned for flatter and more linear effects. The most interesting of these later works is the mosaic of the Mysteries from the Kornmarkt in Trier, which can be dated with reasonable certainty on archaeological grounds to the third quarter of the fourth century²² (figure 85). The scenes represented upon it, and their accompanying inscriptions, may be identified as extracts from the ritual and myth of a pagan mystery cult, and the building itself accordingly as the meeting place of the cult. Despite the obscurity of the details, the mosaic offers a fascinating glimpse of the activity of a group of worshippers at the time when pagan cults were fighting their last



83 Cologne, mosaic of Dionysus. Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln. 7.00 m × 10.57 m. c. AD 220.



84 Nennig, villa, amphitheatre mosaic. 10.30 m × 15.65 m. Second quarter of the third century AD.



85 Trier, Mysteries mosaic from Kornmarkt. Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier. 4.17m × 6.88 m. Third quarter of the fourth century AD.

great battles against the growing force of Christianity. A guilloche divides up the field, but the dense structure of the third-century mosaics is replaced here by a simple design of alternate round and elliptical medallions, with two concave octagons in the centre; the only inner borders are plain frames. Each compartment so formed contains figures. In the round medallions are half-figures of men holding on their heads trays laden with various foods and drinking vessels; their names are given as Paregorius, Eusebius, and Felix, each represented twice. The ellipses contain a variety of figures, all identified by name: two dancing girls holding *crotala* (clappers), men holding implements such as jugs, bowls, and lamps, and one pouring incense onto a tripod. They illustrate preparations for a banquet, accompanied by cult ceremonial; the two scenes in the central octagons give enigmatic clues to the nature of the cult. One shows a scene of ritual: a man holds a long-handled spoon in one hand, and a dead fowl above a basin held out by a second man; both have curious attachments to the shoulders of their tunics, which look as if they may be intended for wings. A third, smaller figure kneels on the other side, holding up a basin containing an egg. In the upper corners are a big pot and a shovel. An inscription gives the names of the characters, Qodvoldeus, Felix, and Andegasus, and what seem to be

instructions for the ritual, whose form has led to much scholarly discussion: Moreau reconstructs them 'Qodvoldeus said: Andegasus, put it down; Felix, take it up'.²³ The other scene is mythological. An egg containing the triplets, Castor, Pollux and Helen, lies on an altar, above which Jupiter in the form of an eagle sits on a column. On either side stand Leda and Agamemnon. We may conclude that the liturgy included the ritual handling of an egg and a bird, and was linked with the legend of the birth of the Dioscuri and Helen from an egg. Although in the most familiar version of the myth Leda was the mother of the triplets, another version gave the mother as the goddess Nemesis, Leda only as the adoptive human nurse. Moreau has argued that this is the version illustrated here, and that the chief deity worshipped must have been Nemesis, whose cult was popular in late antiquity. The role of the egg presumably referred to notions of rebirth; the rest escapes us.

²³ Moreau, *ibid.*, 13–14: Qodvoldeus dix(it): Andegasi, pone, Felix, sume. For the details of Moreau's interpretation cf. the review by H. Brandenburg, *JAC* 7, 1964, 149–55, who questions the role ascribed to Nemesis but offers no better solution. For an implausible explanation of the mosaic as Christian propaganda mocking pagan rituals, see J. Schwartz, J.J. Hatt, 'Une interprétation nouvelle de la mosaïque dite du Kornmarkt de Trèves', *BSNAFr* 1985, 37–45.

IV

In the late Empire a new region of Gaul became prominent. The province of Aquitania in the South-West had previously played only a minor role in the production of mosaics; it was a region of lavish country villas, many of them rebuilt with great luxury in the fourth century on earlier sites. Remote from the troubles of barbarian invasions and economic breakdown which beset other areas of Gaul, they survived the collapse of centralised Roman government. Many of the great villas such as Montmaurin, Valentine, and Lescar remained prosperous throughout the fifth and into the sixth century; although precise *termini* are lacking, redecoration, including the laying of mosaics may have taken place throughout this period.

The workshops which produced these mosaics developed a very individual regional style.²⁴ Figured designs are rare; extensive ornamental carpets often cover vast areas with polychrome geometric compositions. The designs are traced in heavy bands, usually of guilloche and cable, frequently looped or interlaced together. There is a superabundance of ornament; filling motifs are repetitive; little space is left empty. Patterns of architectural derivation, such as an arcade, are also popular; they are treated in an entirely two-dimensional way, framing spaces for the display of different patterns or motifs. The execution is often rapid and irregular; the overall effect was important, not the detail. Colour contrasts were sought, and the rainbow style, which depends upon juxtaposed areas of colour, was popular. Especially characteristic are stylised vegetal designs: they are used for borders, for the bands which form the framework of the composition, and as filling motifs. Complete vegetal carpets also occur, and constitute the most unusual and impressive products of this school; an especially fine example from a villa at Valence-sur-Baïse (Gers) combines dense vine scrolls, a row of fruit trees, and an elaborate vegetal scroll on a dark ground²⁵ (figure 86; plate 12). There are parallels with some of the Spanish workshops

on the other side of the Pyrenees, but the ultimate origin of many of the compositions and motifs used is often North Africa; however, the Aquitanian workshops developed their own idiosyncratic ways of handling these designs. The use of local materials, among them blue-grey and blue-white marbles from the Pyrenees and green ophite, contributes to the impression of a homogeneous regional production.

Some of the finest examples come from the magnificent villa of Séviac at Montréal (Gers).²⁶ In addition to typical geometric carpets, extensive use is made here of vegetal designs, especially those based upon acanthus, with a particular spiky type that is specifically Aquitanian. It is found both in linear compositions of scrolls and in all-over designs of tangent or intersecting circles. One grand room had a more complex pavement, unfortunately damaged, with interlooped bands of laurel and guilloche framing a composition based upon pyramids of vegetation. But the most original composition was found in a smaller room adjacent to this: a row of fruit trees and of lily plants as tall as the trees, heavily laden with fruit and flowers that stand out against the foliage, are crowded together against a plain ground. At their bases are baskets full of fruit and lilies. There is no attempt to subordinate the plants to a geometric composition, nor are any living creatures present.²⁷ One mosaic in the baths of the villa has a *terminus post quem* c.350–60; Balmelle thinks there was more than one phase in the decoration, and that the vegetal mosaics may date from the first half of the fifth century.

A similar rich villa, some of whose mosaics were certainly executed by a workshop from Aquitania, has been found at Loupian (Hérault), which technically belonged to Gallia Narbonensis.²⁸ Among its many mosaics were several very closely related to examples from the Aquitanian villas, with identical types of vegetal motifs; even the materials are the same (plate 13). Others are completely different: both in their all-over compositions and in individual motifs the closest parallels are to be found in

²⁴ Cf. *RecGaule* IV.1, 13–19; IV.2, 13–19; C. Balmelle, 'Le décor végétal des pavements d'Aquitaine', *Dossiers d'Archéologie* 15, 1976, 70–5.

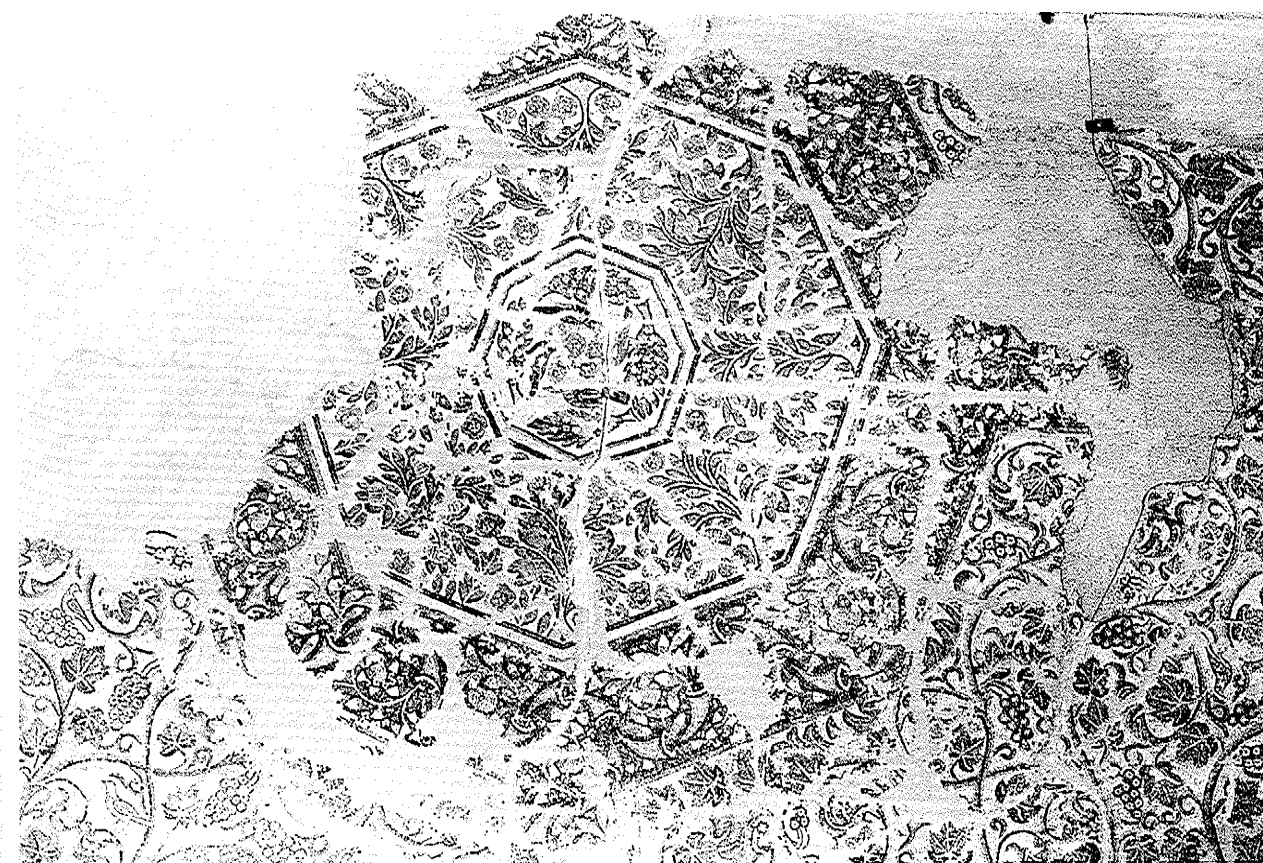
²⁵ C. Balmelle, J. Lapart, 'La mosaïque à décor de pampres de Valence-sur-Baïse (Gers)', *Aquitania* 5, 1987, 177–200.

²⁶ *RecGaule* IV.2, 151–94, nos.258–310, pls.XCII–CXI; P. Aragon-Launet, C. Balmelle, 'Les structures ornementales en acanthe dans les mosaïques de la villa de Séviac, près de Montréal (Gers)', *Gallia* 45, 1987–8, 189–208.

²⁷ *RecGaule* IV.2, 172–4, no.293, pls.CXVI–CXVII; C. Balmelle, 'Les

représentations d'arbres fruitiers sur les mosaïques tardives d'Aquitaine', *CMGR* v, 261–72.

²⁸ H. Lavagne, R. Prudhomme, D. Rouquette, 'La villa gallo-romaine des Près-Bas à Loupian (Hérault)', *Gallia* 34, 1976, 215–35; H. Lavagne, 'Deux mosaïques de style orientalisant', *Mon Piot* 61, 1977, 61–86; H. Lavagne, D. Rouquette, R. Prudhomme, 'Les nouvelles mosaïques de la villa gallo-romaine de Loupian (Hérault)', *RANarb* 14, 1981, 173–203. There is little archaeological evidence for the date, but Lavagne places the majority of the mosaics at the beginning of the fifth century AD.



86 Valence-sur-Baïse (Gers), vine pavement. Probably late fourth to fifth century AD.

the eastern Mediterranean, especially in Antioch and Syria. The two currents appear to operate simultaneously, and some floors show a merging of the two. The eastern elements seem too strong to be explicable only by the importation of models or cartoons from the east; it looks rather as though actual eastern-trained mosaicists were present. The mosaics of south-west Gaul, therefore, offer a remarkable illustration of two contrary trends in late antiquity. On the one hand there are the regional workshops with their individual repertory and style continuing to operate regardless of political and economic crises;

on the other is the continuing movement of men and ideas around the Mediterranean.

Bibliography

Lancha, *Mos. géom.*; Parlasca; Gonzenbach. The volumes of *RecGaule* comprise three fascicules on Gallia Belgica (1957, 1960, 1963), five on Lugdunensis (1967, 1975, 1977, 1990, 1994), two on Narbonensis (1979, 1981), two on Aquitania (1980, 1987).

Britain

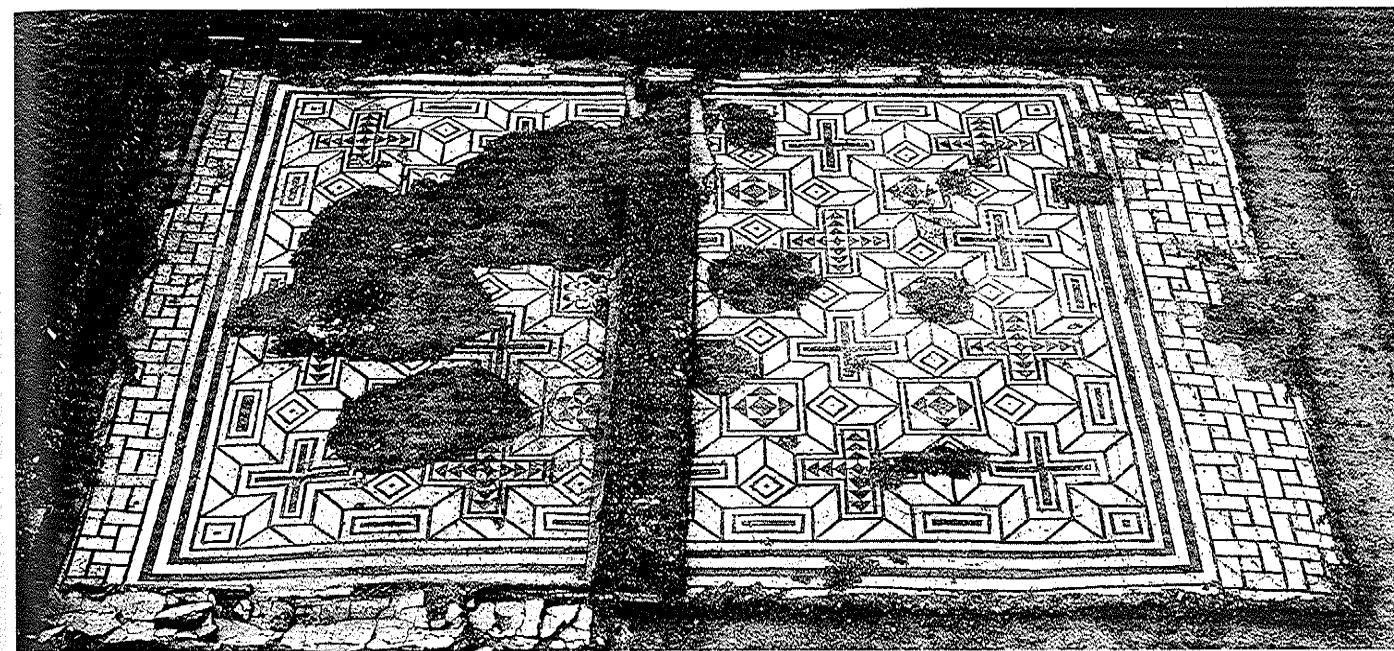
I

Although no Corpus of the mosaics of Roman Britain has yet been published, the study of mosaics in the province has benefited from the rigorous standards of archaeological investigation practised in Britain throughout much of this century. While this has not always resulted in firm dates for the mosaics established on the basis of stratigraphy, a higher proportion than usual possess at least a secure *terminus post quem*. Moreover, as early as the 1960s the pioneer work of David Smith introduced the concept of distinguishing between the work of different regional 'schools' on the basis, primarily, of the methods of composition employed, and of their favourite ornamental patterns or combinations of patterns.¹ Technical studies of the methods of operation of the craftsmen have also been carried further here than in most other parts of the empire. In consequence, Britain offers a good case study of the potential of such approaches to the study of mosaics, but also of their limitations.

The use of mosaics was introduced to Britain within a few decades of the conquest. Fragments have been found in the legionary baths constructed c.AD 60 at Isca (Exeter), and may safely be assigned to craftsmen accompanying the legions.² A much more substantial group of early pavements comes from the great villa at Fishbourne, in Sussex. Traces show that the first major building, the so-called proto-palace of the Neronian period, was decorated with black-and-white mosaics and *opus sectile*. In the 'Flavian Palace' which replaced it, mosaic was used very extensively; remains of at least fifteen mosaic pavements survive from the construction period, and the

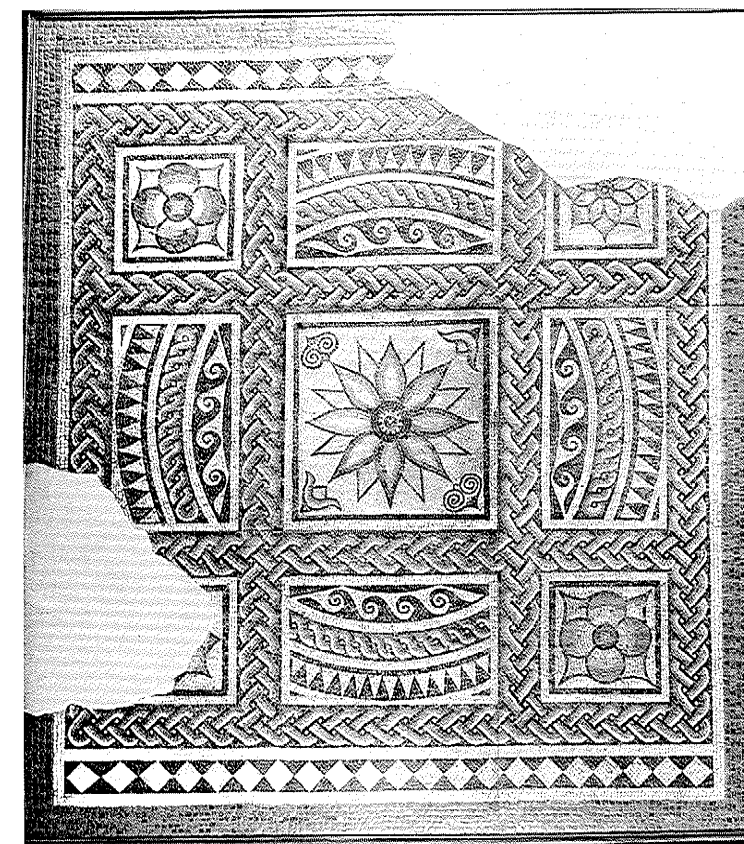
original total was much higher. The majority contain black-and-white geometric patterns, directly comparable to those used in Italy or southern Gaul: patterns of stars of lozenges, chequers, meander, or schematic floral motifs (figure 87). A few introduce very limited use of subsidiary colours, yellow and red or red and blue; one recalls the multiple decor mosaics of northern Italy and Gaul.³ Two polychrome mosaics (Rooms N20 and N21) were also ascribed to this period by the excavator, but parallels suggest that they should be placed in the second century.⁴ The Palace itself was a luxurious, prestige building (whether or not it is to be identified as the residence of the client king Cogidubnus, as Cunliffe suggested), and its decoration was evidently the work of craftsmen brought in from the continent specifically for this project. Mosaic floors, along with other elements of decoration such as marble veneers, stucco mouldings, and painted plaster, helped to impress on the visitor a sense of Roman style and elegance transported into the British countryside.

It remains uncertain how much immediate influence they had, and how rapidly the example of Roman manners set by Fishbourne was copied by other wealthy settlers or newly Romanised Britons. Scattered finds of mosaics from the late first and early second centuries AD have been made in both town and country settings; but it is not until the middle of the second century that production appears to have become firmly established and workshops founded. These are predominantly an urban phenomenon; one of the principal sites is Verulamium (St Albans). About a dozen decorative mosaics here are probably or certainly to be attributed to the second half of the



87 Fishbourne, geometric mosaic in room N12. Last quarter of the first century AD.

second century; they occupied the main rooms in several of the comfortable houses in the centre of the town, while *signinum* or plain floors of large terracotta tesserae were used in secondary rooms. Similar terracotta tesserae, red and yellow, frequently surround the decorative portion of the finer mosaics. These are polychrome and mostly geometric, with floral fillings; common designs are grids of squares or rectangles, and variations on patterns of lozenges. They are derived from the standard decorative repertory of the continental workshops, principally those of Gaul and Germany; but the treatment is sometimes idiosyncratic. For instance, on one pavement a grid of nine panels, outlined in guilloche, is superimposed on a circle with concentric borders, visible in the side panels of the grid (figure 88); the scheme is otherwise known only on two floors from neighbouring Camulodunum (Colchester), assigned by Smith to the same school as those of Verulamium.⁵ Many of the floral motifs used as borders or as filling ornaments are also characteristic: some are distinctive to Britain, but distributed widely throughout the province, others confined to the individual workshops.⁶ Figured designs are rare; one, dated



88 Verulamium, geometric mosaic, no. 7. Verulamium Museum, St Albans. Second half of the second century AD.

¹ See bibliography. Smith's use of the word 'school' has been questioned, on the grounds that it implies too formal an organisation; I continue to use it, with the proviso that it should not be taken necessarily to imply more than a loose grouping of craftsmen and workshops. See further below, section II, ns.12-14.

² D.J. Smith, 'Fragments of mosaic from the Legionary Baths', in P. Bidwell, *The Legionary Bath-house and Basilica and Forum at Exeter* (Exeter 1979), 132-4, pl. xvi.

³ B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Fishbourne 1961-1969* 1, *The Site* (Leeds 1971), esp. 145-50, pls. LXXIV-LXXX; he dates the proto-palace c. AD

65-70, the Flavian palace c. 75-80. Slightly later dates (c. 75-80 for the proto-palace, c. 90-110 for the palace) are proposed by E.W. Black, *The Roman Villas of South-East England* (BAR 171, Oxford 1987), 84-6; these would exclude the proposed association with Cogidubnus. For the multiple decor mosaic (beneath the later mosaic of Cupid on a dolphin, below n. 9) see D. Rudkin, 'Recent discoveries at Fishbourne Roman Palace', *Mosaic* 4, 1981, 8-10, fig. 5.

⁴ Cunliffe, *ibid.*, 99-100, 149, pls. XXV-XXVII, LXXXI-LXXXII, xci; the date is questioned by Smith, *CMGR* III, 357.

⁵ R.E.M. and T. Wheeler, *Verulamium. A Belgic and Two Roman Cities* (Oxford 1936), 146, no. 7, from building IV.1, pl. XLIVb, late second century; Smith, *CMGR* II, 276-7, pls. CXV-CXVII, with Colchester parallels; Smith, *CMGR* III, 362-4.

⁶ Smith, *CMGR* II, esp. 287-9, on 'cornice pattern', 'miniature scroll', 'squared rosette', and 'Verulamium dahlia'.



89 Verulamium, mosaic of Ocean, no.8. Verulamium Museum, St Albans. c. AD 160–190.



90 Fishbourne, room N7, mosaic with Cupid. 3.96 m × 3.96 m. c. AD 160–200.

c.160–90, shows a bust of Oceanus in the central square, surrounded by a meander border framing rosettes and *kantharoi* (figure 89). On another a lion with a stag's head in its jaws occupies a square at the centre of a more complex geometric design with scooped-out semi-circles on the sides, heavily framed in guilloche: again there are floral motifs and *kantharoi* in the spaces thus formed.⁷

In addition to this group active in the neighbourhood of Verulamium and Camulodunum in the second century, another can be identified in the western region of the province; one of its centres was Corinium (Cirencester), more prominent in the following period.⁸ New mosaics were also laid in several rooms at Fishbourne in the course of the second and (probably) the early third century: they are quite different in character from those of the original building, and several are of very poor quality. The most competent is that of Room N7, dated c.160–200; it is executed in a mixture of black-and-white and polychromy, recalling a taste found in Gaul and Spain in the second century (figure 90). Polychrome are the Cupid on a dolphin in the central circle, sea-monsters in semi-circles along two sides, and ray patterns in the angles, while sea-monsters in the two remaining semi-circles, and *kantharoi* in the spaces between are black and white; limited polychromy (three and four colours) is used in the borders.⁹

There can be little doubt that mosaic workshops originally came to Britain from Gaul; but by the time we get a clear picture of their activity in the island, in the second half of the second century, they had already developed a character of their own. Local preferences for overall designs were beginning to appear in different regions, and distinctive ornaments, principally floral, had evolved.

⁷ Wheeler, *Verulamium* (cit.n.5), 146, no.8, building IV.8, room 4, pls.XLI, XLV; S. Frere, *Verulamium Excavations II* (London 1983), 163, building XXI, 2, room 4, pl.XVIII, c.AD 180; J.M.C. Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 275–7, pl.LXIIB; Toynbee, *Roman Britain* 196–7, nos.178, 179, pls.207–8.

⁸ Smith, *CMGR* III, 362–4. On the relationships between the groups of mosaics, see N. Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics. A Reassessment and Critique of some Notable Stylistic Affinities* (BAR-BS 135, Oxford 1984), 17–45, who thinks that close affinities, indicative of single schools or workshops, can be seen at this date only in the east, in the west merely some much broader regional preferences.

⁹ Cunliffe, *Excavations* (cit.n.3), 160–9, esp.pls.XLVII–LVIII, LXXXVIII; D.J. Smith, 'The later mosaics of Fishbourne', *Mosaic* 2, 1980, 13–16; Smith, *Villa* 76–7, pl.3.2. The Cupid and dolphin mosaic has a *terminus post quem* of c.160: see Rudkin, 'Recent discoveries' (cit.n.3), 8. For limited polychromy in Gaul and Spain, see above, ch.5, section 1, and below, ch.9, section 1.

Figured motifs are few and conventional, and tell us little about the interests of those who commissioned them. The dominant taste is for elaborate ornamental designs, with multiple borders, especially heavy bands of guilloche, and a dense accumulation of filling motifs. It is probably the materials used which do most to create a specifically Romano-British style of mosaic. These are mostly local stones, extensively supplemented by terracotta (cut from roof-tiles or pottery) to provide red, ochre, and occasionally other colours. The range of colours tends to be limited, in contrast with many parts of the Mediterranean world; more importantly, the range of shades of any one colour is also very limited. Already in the second century, therefore, the British mosaics use areas of flat colour without shading in a way which is elsewhere more typical of the fourth. The characteristic rosettes have petals formed of flat bands of red, ochre, or blue-grey; the scrolls are linear spirals, relieved by patches of one or two colours to indicate sheaths or leaves; the nature of the materials dictates a tendency to schematisation and abstraction. The figures are equally schematic, with a heavy reliance on dark outlines, stripes of contrasting colours within them, and inorganic patches of white to indicate highlights.

II

Very few mosaics in Britain can be dated to the third century; in the second half of that century production seems almost to have ceased. Economic causes were presumably responsible; moreover, the great building boom of the second century in the towns meant that a substantial number of houses were already fully equipped with pavements, and had no need of new ones. Demand was evidently minimal in both town and country for anything more than repair work.¹⁰ But around AD 300 another remarkable surge of building and decorating began, which lasted through much of the fourth century. The last known dated mosaic, in a villa at Hucclecote in Gloucestershire, has a *terminus post quem* provided by a (worn) coin of Theodosius I of AD 395 embedded in the

mortar. There is no need to assume that production ceased abruptly with the official abandonment of the province by the Imperial government after AD 407, but it is unlikely to have survived the troubles of the fifth century for long.¹¹

The towns had their share of new construction: about half the Verulamium mosaics may be placed after AD 300. But the main impetus to mosaic production came from the enormous expansion in the construction or embellishment of wealthy country villas, which are found throughout the British provinces but especially in the prosperous south-west. These fourth-century villa mosaics constitute the most significant products of the mosaicists' craft in Britain; they greatly exceed those of the towns both in number and in quality of execution and originality of design. They have provided the best opportunity for the identification of distinct 'schools', and of the sphere of operation of each, though the workshops responsible for them may in most cases be taken to have been located in the towns. In a study published in 1965 Smith identified three such schools, all active in the course of the fourth century: two in the south-west, the Corinian, centred in Corinium (Cirencester), and the Durnovarian, centred in Durnovaria (Dorchester), and one in the north, probably based in the little town of Petuaria (Brough-on-Humber). Subsequent studies, of Smith and others, extended these and added three more: a second one in Corinium, named the Corinian Saltire School to distinguish it from the previously identified Corinian Orpheus School; the Central Southern Group, operating in modern Hampshire, whose most conspicuous products are the mosaics of the villa at Bignor; and one in the midlands, named for finds at Durobrivae (Water Newton). Not all the mosaics of this period can be attributed to an identified school, however; some significant complexes, including the villas at Brading in the Isle of Wight and of Lullingstone in Kent, remain unassigned.¹²

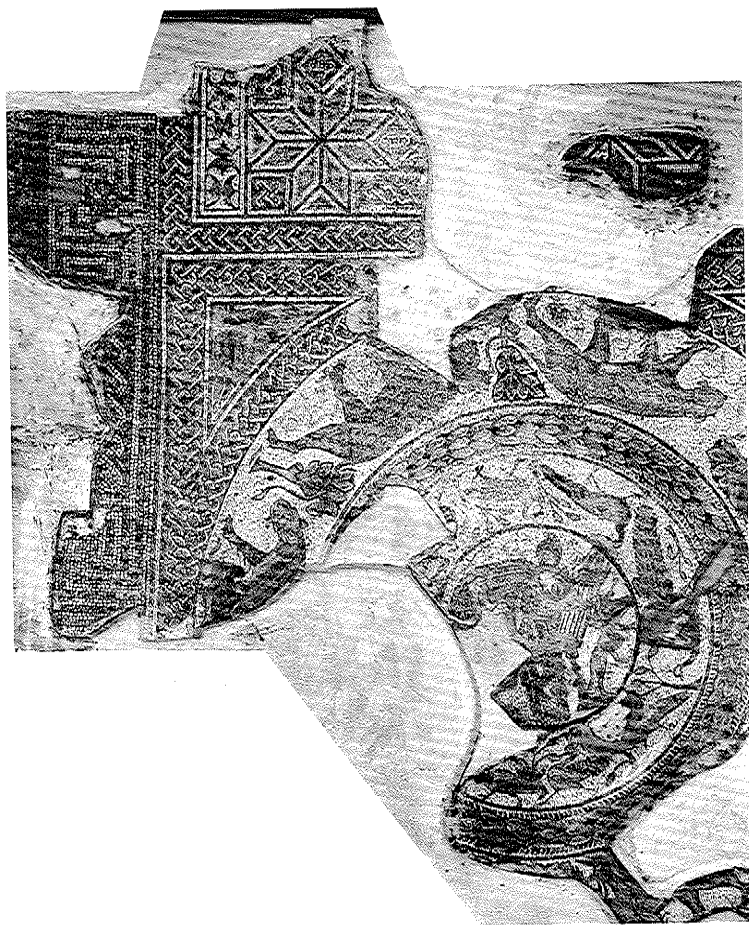
The identifications are based on the recurrence of characteristic compositions, patterns, and motifs, some unique to the group in question, others occurring in particular combinations. The breakdown into schools is not

¹⁰ D.J. Smith, 'Romano-British mosaics in the third century', in A. King, M. Henig eds., *The Roman West in the Third Century. Contributions from Archaeology and History I* (BAR-IS 109, Oxford 1981), 159–65.

¹¹ Smith, *Villa* 79–81; Smith, *CMGR* III, 366–76. Hucclecote: E.M. Clifford, *Transactions of Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological*

Society 55, 1933, 328–9, 347.

¹² Smith, *CMGR* I, 95–116; Smith, *Villa* 95–113; Smith, *CMGR* III, 366–76; D.E. Johnston, 'The Central Southern Group of Romano-British mosaics', in J. Munby, M. Henig eds., *Roman Life and Art in Britain. A Celebration in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Jocelyn Toynbee* (BAR-BS 41(i), Oxford 1977), 195–215.



91 Corinium, Barton Farm Villa, Orpheus and the Beasts. Corinium Museum, Cirencester. Early fourth century AD.

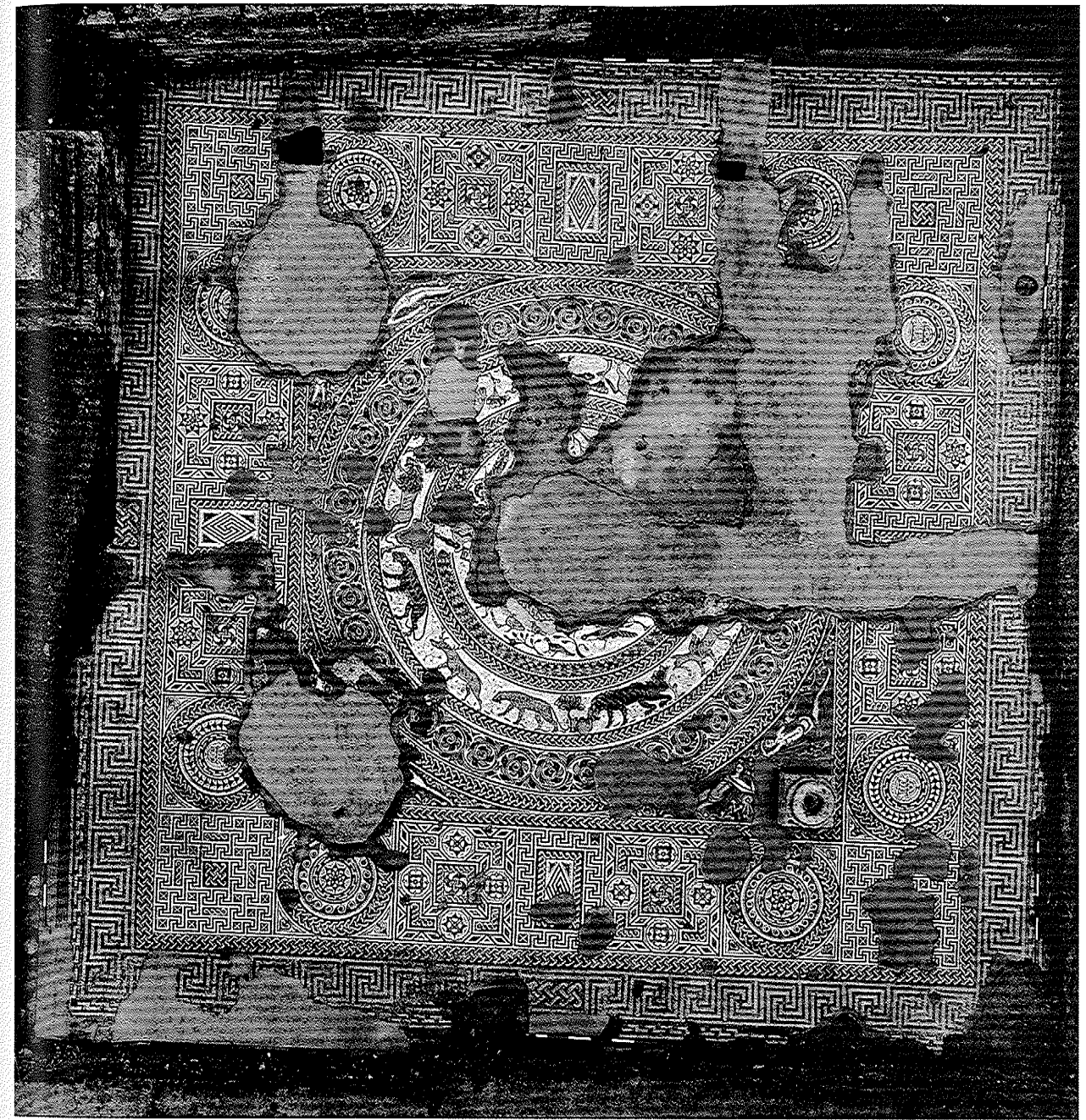
absolute; indeed, the more closely they are examined, the greater the appearance of overlap and doubtful cases. The 'schools' are in fact loose groupings of pavements with substantial resemblances and affinities between them; no exact repetitions are known. It may be assumed that in each case there was, at least in the first instance, a single workshop, operating in the villas in the vicinity of its base. Smith has suggested a provisional chronology, allowing a life-span of about twenty to thirty years for each.¹³ But inevitably workshops must have spawned branch workshops; workmen migrated (sometimes from one work-

shop to another), taking with them the repertory they had learnt; patterns may have circulated; and the work done by one was sometimes available and visible to be copied by another. N. Cookson has endeavoured to examine more closely the relationships between the mosaics, and to distinguish levels of affinity: for instance, to distinguish between the operation of a single workshop, involving the same craftsmen, and a looser group of interrelated mosaics where one of the craftsmen responsible for one may have been involved in a second, and so on. The attempt is commendable, but the complexity of the subject leads to a lack of clarity in exposition. It is likely that techniques such as computer-aided cluster analysis (used to a limited degree by D. Johnston to identify his Central Southern Group) may prove helpful in isolating significant groups.¹⁴

The Corinian Orpheus School is the best known and probably the most sophisticated of these schools. Its work has been identified over a wide area around Corinium (Smith lists nine sites and two dubious cases)¹⁵, with a number of characteristic patterns. Its name is derived from the treatment given to the subject of Orpheus and the Beasts, found on mosaics at the Barton Farm Villa near Corinium (Cirencester) itself (figure 91), and in villas at Newton St Loe, Withington, and Woodchester. A circular composition is adopted, different from the methods by which the same subject is usually represented elsewhere in the Empire. Orpheus in the centre is surrounded by a ring of beasts separated by trees, with sometimes an intermediate ring of birds; the whole is then framed in a square, with complex geometric borders.¹⁶ The most impressive of the series, indeed the largest mosaic pavement known in Britain, is that at the great villa at Woodchester in Gloucestershire (figures 92, 93; plate 14). This was a villa of exceptional size and grandeur, at least twenty of whose rooms were decorated with mosaics. The Orpheus pavement occupied the central hall, c.14.86 m square.¹⁷ The centre here was an octagon

cular scheme are known, at Volubilis in Morocco and at Mérida in Spain (for which see J.M. Alvarez Martinez, *CMGR* V, 211-16), but they bear no relation to those in Britain.

¹³ Smith, *CMGR* III, 373-4: Central Southern Group, ?c.300-25; Corinian Orpheus School, ?c.300-20; Corinian Saltire, ?c.320-40/50; Durnovarian, ?c.340/50-70+; Petuarian, ?c.340-50; Durobrivan, ?c.350/65-70/80.
¹⁴ Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics* (cit.n.8), esp.46-77 on the 'Corinian' mosaics; Johnston, 'The Central Southern Group' (cit.n.12).
¹⁵ Smith, *CMGR* III, 376.
¹⁶ Smith, 'Orpheus mosaics in Britain', *Hommages Stern*, 315-28, with refs. Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics* (cit.n.8), 61-3, questions whether Newton St Loe is rightly included in the Corinian group. For Orpheus mosaics in general, see H. Stern, 'La mosaïque d'Orphée de Blanzky-les-Fismes', *Gallia* 13, 1955, 49-77. Two others based on a cir-



92 Woodchester, villa, Orpheus and the Beasts. 13.91 m × 13.76 m. Probably early fourth century AD.

originally containing representations of fish, possibly with a fountain basin or similar feature. Orpheus was therefore moved into the next encircling ring, where he sat playing his lyre in the midst of a procession of birds. A second ring, separated by concentric borders, contained the beasts, walking against a plain white ground, with small trees between them. Beyond this was an outer ring, with a fleshy scroll, of a type characteristic of the work of this school, growing from a head of Ocean. This circle is contained in a square, with four column-bases in its corners; in the spandrels are pairs of water-nymphs,

shown, unusually, against a dark background. The square outer frame is divided into twenty-four panels with patterns repeated symmetrically about the main axes, and the whole enclosed by a series of borders. The overall effect is marked by a sureness of design, with the lighter figured sections in the central circles set off by the extreme elaboration of the geometric frame. Although the tesserae are fairly large (mostly over 1.2 cm square), and the range of colours, from local stones and brick, is limited, the execution is regular and confident. The animals are schematic, with strongly marked outlines and strikingly



93 Woodchester, villa, Orpheus and the Beasts, detail of stag.

patterned skins: the tigress and leopard are especially effective. On the other hand the forms of the nymphs are thoroughly inorganic; classical proportions are abandoned, and they are elongated to fit the space available. Heavy brown outlines mark the anatomical divisions (for instance of the pelvis); in some parts the tesserae are set in lines that follow the curve of the body, to suggest the roundness of breasts or belly: a procedure known as the use of worklines.

Although the Orpheus mosaic at Woodchester is not dated archaeologically, the very closely related mosaic at the Barton Farm, Cirencester, is probably dated to the early fourth century (c.300–20?), and a similar date is likely also for the Woodchester pavement.¹⁸ Smith believes that the simpler Orpheus mosaics which he assigns to the school, at Newton St Loe and Withington, should be earlier than the much more elaborate and sophisticated works at Cirencester and Woodchester; but

¹⁸ Smith, *Villa* 101. Two late third-century coins, including one of Allectus (293–6) in mint condition, were found in the earth beneath the Barton Farm mosaic, but were not actually sealed by it: the *terminus post quem* that they suggest cannot therefore be proven.

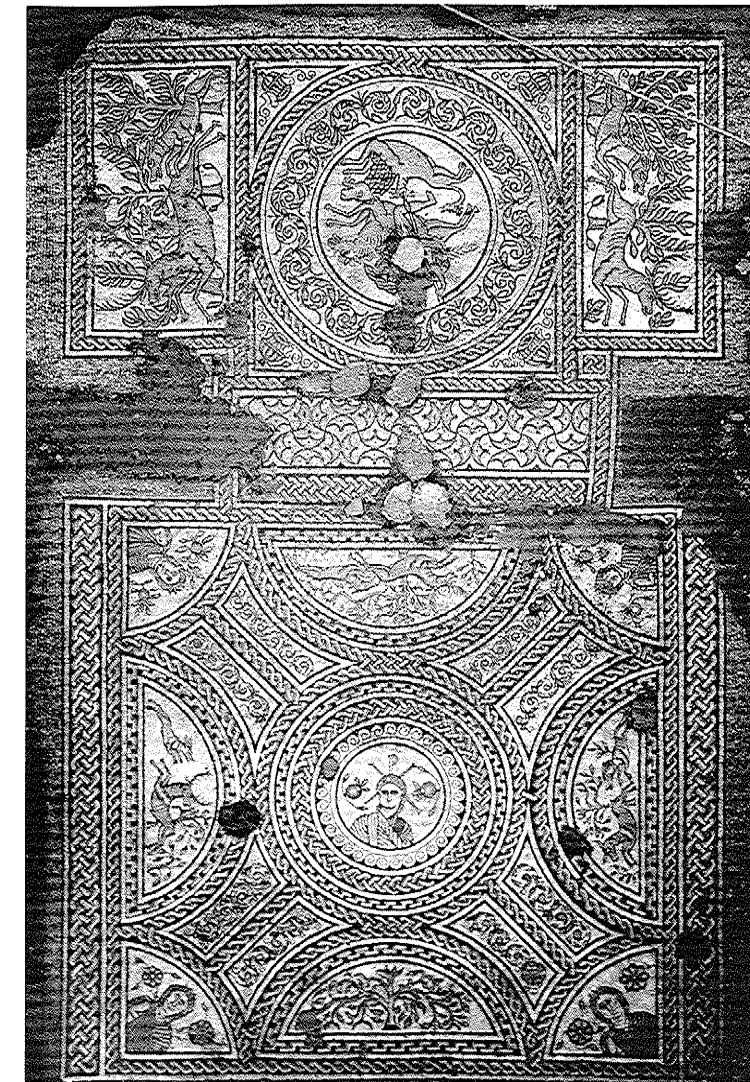
this assumption of typological evolution from the simpler to the more complex is not necessary. The degree of elaboration was undoubtedly dictated by economic considerations; and the simpler versions may in fact be attributable to less skilful craftsmen trying to imitate the master work of the Woodchester and Barton Farm pavements. Also relevant in this context is the almost exact parallel which has been noted between the geometric design used in one of the panels of the frame of the Woodchester Orpheus, and that of a fragmentary mosaic found in Augusta Treverorum (Trier) in Gallia Belgica, in the area of the Constantinian palace, probably dated soon after AD 300. The resemblance is too close to be due to chance. The design might have been conveyed by a pattern-book, but the detail seems too minute to have been conveyed by such a medium, and the similarity is more probably to be attributed to the movement of the mosaicist himself. Smith believes that the master-designer of the Corinian school moved to Trier, attracted by the opportunities for employment there when the city was an Imperial residence; but the opposite hypothesis of Parlasca seems more likely. We may suppose a mosaicist

trained in Trier, migrating to Britain under the attraction of the boom in building villas on the scale of Woodchester; he would have brought some of his repertory with him, and trained local craftsmen. The originality of the new Orpheus designs, unparalleled on the continent, must be his own contribution.¹⁹

The masterpieces of the Durnovarian school are the mosaics from two buildings in Dorset normally identified as villas: that from Hinton St Mary, discovered in 1963 and now in the British Museum, and the lost pavements at Frampton, known from the early nineteenth-century engravings of Samuel Lysons.²⁰ The Hinton St Mary mosaic is divided into two sections, connected by a threshold panel (figures 94, 95; plate 15). In the smaller, a central medallion represents Bellerophon killing the Chimaera, framed by a scroll (less fleshy than the scrolls of the Corinian school), and flanked by two panels with hounds pursuing deer, against a background of trees. Guilloche encircles the panels, and similarly divides up the mosaic of the larger room into a design of a central circle, semi-circles on the sides, and quarter-circles on the angles. Three of the semi-circles contain further hunting scenes of hounds and deer; the fourth a single tree. In the quarter-circles are four male busts with windswept hair; two are flanked by pairs of rosettes, the other two by pomegranates. They are undoubtedly derived from representations of the Wind gods, who are shown in very similar form on two of the Frampton mosaics. The central medallion is emphasised by three concentric borders within the framework of guilloche. It contains the bust of a man with shoulder-length hair, wearing a tunic and a heavy white mantle, the *pallium*. Behind his head is the Chi-Rho monogram, the symbol of Christ, and a pomegranate is on either side. It is generally agreed that the bust is indeed that of Christ. Although the monogram appears on a few other mosaics, including one of those at Frampton, this is the only example known where a portrait of Christ himself appears on a pavement; usually there was a reluctance on the part of Christians to place the sacred image where it might be trodden on. Even more remarkable is its appearance together with the traditional mythological subject of Bellerophon, and with

¹⁹ Trier, Palastplatz: Parlasca 50, pl.50; for fourth-century Trier, above, ch.5, section III. For the direction of influence between Trier and the Corinian school see P. Johnson, 'Some chronological problems in Romano-British mosaics', *CMGR* 14, 318. For questions of pattern-books, see ch.18, section IV.

²⁰ Hinton St Mary: J.M.C. Toynbee, 'A new Roman mosaic pavement



94 Hinton St Mary, general view. British Museum, London. Larger section 5.22 m × 4.53 m; small section 5.04 m × 2.44 m. Mid- to late fourth century AD.

the Wind gods. A similar combination of pagan and Christian is found at Frampton, where the Chi-Rho monogram marked a pavement which contained a mask of Neptune and a series of mythological scenes, including Bellerophon, while Dionysus was shown in the adjoining room; the Winds and further deities and mythological scenes appeared on two other mosaics of the villa. Both complexes have been interpreted as illustrating a Christianisation of the pagan subjects, symbolic of the victory of good over evil, and expressing the Christian

found in Dorset', *JRS* 54, 1964, 7–14, frontispiece and pls.1–vii; Neal, *Roman Mosaics* 87–9, no.61. Frampton: S. Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae* 1 (London 1813), part III, 1–6, pls.1–vii; Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 250–2; Toynbee, *Roman Britain* 202–3, no.199, pl.234. Cf. Smith, *CMGR* 1, 100–2, figs.5–7; Smith, *Villa* 109–10, pls.3.27–3.29, for both villas.



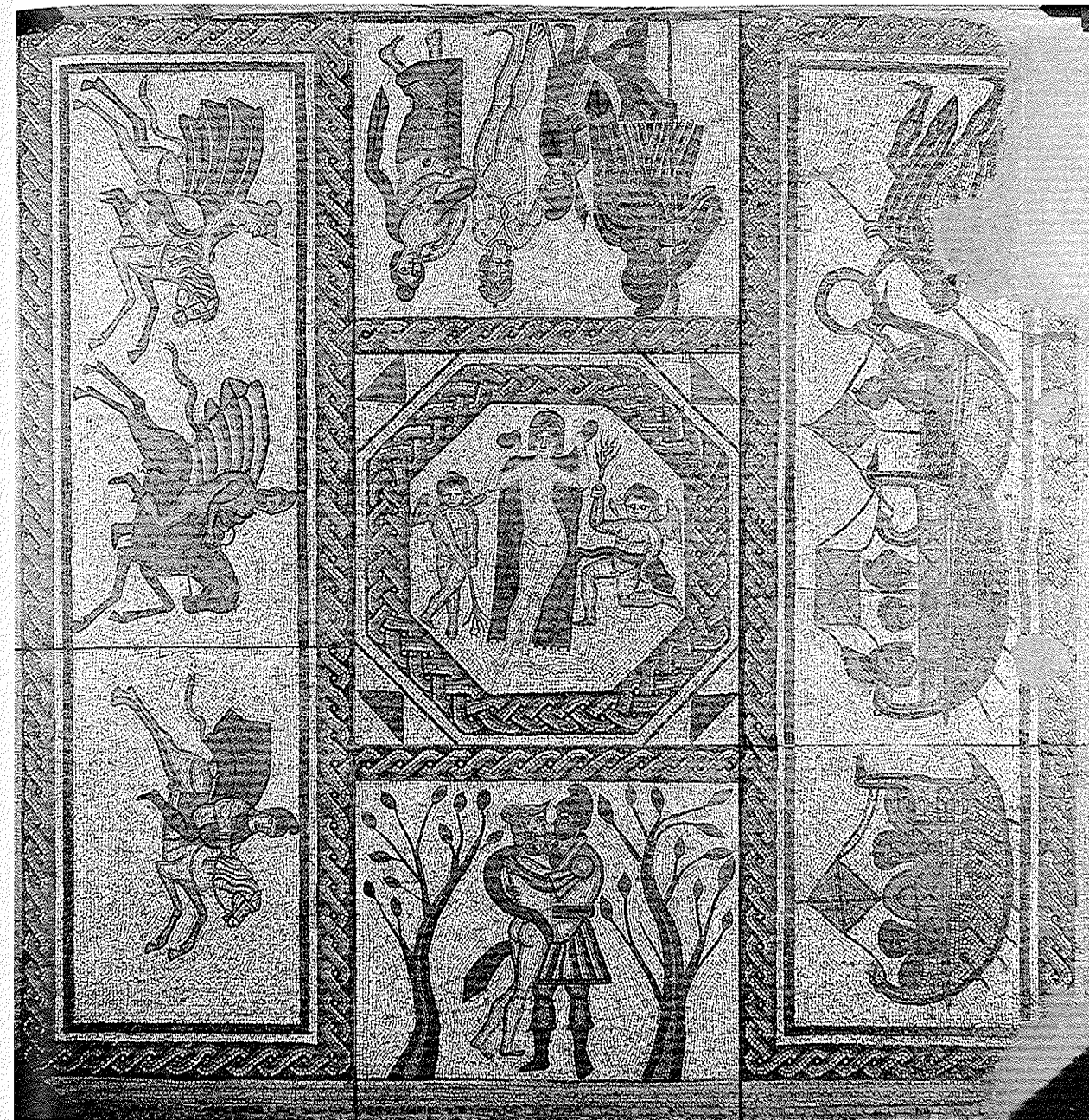
95 Hinton St Mary, detail, panel with hound pursuing deer.

hope for immortality and salvation.²¹ But the search for profound and coherent allegories may exaggerate the significance which the wealthy British patrons imparted to the floors of the great halls or dining-rooms of their villas (though in neither case is the nature of the building established for certain). Alternatively, the two sets of mosaics have been seen as representing an assembly of fashionable subjects which evoke the fruitfulness of the earth and the prosperity of the estate, and whose mythological scenes display their owners' culture. Among these are introduced the symbols and even the portrait of the new and powerful god, under whose protection the house-owners thereby placed themselves as the ultimate guarantor of a somewhat worldly felicity.²² The date of the Hinton St Mary mosaic (and therefore also of the Frampton mosaics) is not earlier than the middle of the fourth century; at this date Christianity appealed to many at a superficial level, as the successful religion of the court. Others interpreted its message of salvation more profoundly, but sometimes in decidedly heterodox combinations. The debate over the significance of the Hinton St

Mary and Frampton mosaics continues, and is not likely to be settled definitively; they demonstrate a symbiosis of pagan and Christian elements in the fourth-century, which might cover a multitude of different personal interpretations.²³

Further light on the culture of the villa-owners is thrown by another mosaic from this region, from Low Ham in Somerset, probably also of the mid-fourth century²⁴ (figure 96). Here, unusually, the mosaic consists almost entirely of figured scenes; four rectangular panels, two long and two short, surround a central octagon in a square. The four outer panels contain scenes from the story of Aeneas and Dido closely based on Books I and IV of the Aeneid. Successive panels show the Trojan ships arriving in Africa, with Achates' embassy to Dido; Venus sending Cupid in the form of Ascanius to stir up love between Aeneas and Dido; the hunt, with Ascanius, Aeneas and Dido on horseback; and finally the two lovers embracing. In the centre, Venus watches over the effects of her work, between two Cupids holding torches, one raised for life, the other pointing downwards for death.

Direct illustrations of Vergil are surprisingly rare on mosaics, and indeed in Roman art generally. Even rarer is a consecutive sequence of scenes like these; and it is therefore suggested that the source of the mosaic may lie in the illustrations of texts like the two (somewhat later) illuminated Vergil manuscripts in the Vatican Library. It is unlikely that the Low Ham mosaicists were working directly from such illustrations. The manuscript pictures place the figures in a spatial setting, with landscape or architectural background, very different from the frieze-like rendering of the mosaic where the figures are isolated against the white ground (the only landscape elements are the two thin trees on either side of the lovers in the final scene). Any influence from book illustration is likely to lie through an intermediary: a model, perhaps in the form of



96 Low Ham, scenes of Dido and Aeneas. Somerset County Museum, Taunton. c.3.96 m square. Probably mid-fourth century AD.

²¹ Most recently by E.W. Black, 'Christian and pagan hopes of salvation in Romano-British mosaics', in M. Henig, A. King eds., *Pagan Gods and Shrines of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1986), 147–57, which I find unconvincing: the conclusion, for instance, that 'such . . . explicitly Christian floors can hardly have belonged to anything but chapels or house-churches' (150) ignores the explicit references to Neptune and Cupid on the Frampton mosaic, which would not have been acceptable in a Christian cult building.

²² Cf. H. Brandenburg, 'Bellerophon christianus? Zur Deutung des Mosaiks von Hinton St Mary und zum Problem der Mythendarstellung in der kaiserzeitlichen dekorativen Kunst', *RömQSch* 63, 1968, 49–86; Brandenburg, 'Christussymbole in frühchristlichen Bodenmosaiken', *RömQSch* 64, 1969, 74–88; J. Huskinson, 'Some pagan mythological figures and their significance

in early Christian art', *BSR* 42, 1974, 76–8, with convincing arguments against a Christianised Bellerophon.

²³ Cf. also M. Henig, 'Ita intellexit numine inductus tuos: some personal interpretations of deity in Roman religion', in Henig and King, *Pagan Gods* (cit. n. 21), 162–4. Date of Hinton St Mary: Smith, *CMGR* III, 370, c.335–55; Brandenburg shows that the monogram-nimbus is not attested before the late fourth century, and that the mosaic can hardly be earlier than the third quarter of that century (*RömQSch* 64, 1969, 88 n.40).

²⁴ Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 241–6, pl. LVIII; Toynbee, *Roman Britain* 203, no. 200, pl. 235; Smith, *Villa* 90, 117, pl. 3.5; Smith, *CMGR* III, 370. It comes from the *frigidarium* of the villa's baths; an earlier bath-building beneath was dated c.330, providing a *terminus post quem* for the mosaics: *JRS* 44, 1954, 100.

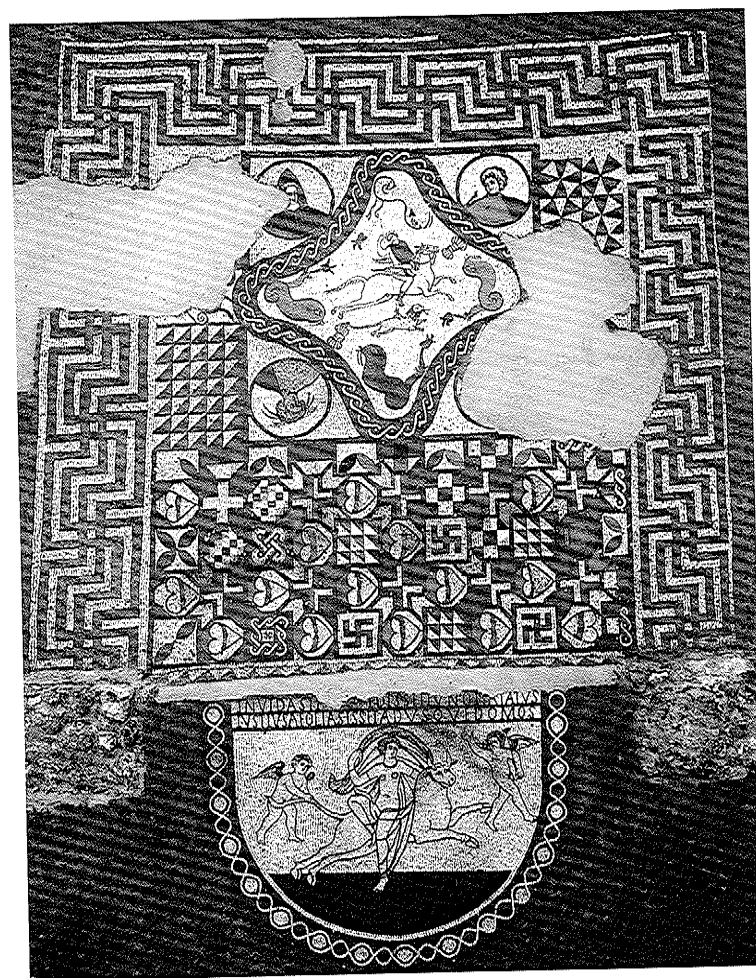
a pattern-book with a repertory of drawings. The method of composition is unparalleled in Britain, and has little in common with the other works attributed to the Durnovarian school; another reason for supposing an imported model.²⁵

Whatever its source the mosaic undoubtedly bears witness to an enthusiasm for Vergil on the part of the owner who commissioned the unique subject from the mosaicists. Other fourth-century mosaics in Britain similarly attest to literary, and especially Vergilian, interests.

Another scene from the Aeneid has been identified on one of the Frampton mosaics;²⁶ and at Lullingstone in Kent a scene of Europa and the Bull is accompanied by a two-line verse inscription, in quite elegant Latin, alluding to the

²⁵ Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 245; for the Vergil manuscripts, see D. Wright, *The Vatican Vergil. A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art* (Berkeley 1993), with refs. For the wider question of illustrated manuscripts as possible sources for mosaics, see ch. 18, n. 50.

²⁶ A. Barrett, 'A Vergilian scene from Frampton', *AntJ* 57, 1977, 312–14, pl. LIV: scene identified as Aeneas with the Golden Bough.



97 Lullingstone, villa, mosaic showing Europa and the Bull in foreground, Bellerophon and the Seasons in central panel. Mid-fourth century AD.

enmity of Juno towards Aeneas in Book I of the Aeneid. The point, that such enmity would have been more justly aimed against her faithless husband Jupiter, is somewhat oblique; as Toynbee says, 'the lines would have been meaningless to anyone who did not know his Virgil'.²⁷ The mosaic decorated an apsidal room designed for a semi-circular dining-couch (the *stibadium* or *sigma*); a second figured panel in the front part of the room showed Bellerophon and the Chimaera, surrounded by busts of the Seasons²⁸ (figure 97). These mosaics are very different in style from any of those just discussed, and Smith has not been able to associate them with any of his schools.

²⁷ *Invidia si ta[juri] vidisset Iuno natatus / iustius Aeolias isset adusque domos*. cf. Aen. 1.50f. Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 262–5, pl. LXA; see also A. Barrett, 'Knowledge of the literary classics in Roman Britain', *Britannia* 9, 1978, 309–13.

²⁸ G. W. Meates, *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent* (Monograph Series of the Kent Archaeological Society 1, 1979), 76–83, colour pls. and pls. xv–xvii; Smith, *Villa* 90–1, 117, pl. 3.7. A coin of AD 330–37 gives a *terminus post quem* for the mosaics; Meates suggests c. 330–60.

²⁹ Toynbee, *Roman Britain* 198, no. 184, pl. 220; Smith, *CMGR* 1, 98, fig. 4.

The figures are represented in part in pure line drawing, while other parts, such as Bellerophon's cloak and the body of the Chimaera, are filled in with undifferentiated areas of colour. The main figures are skilfully and cleanly drawn, and form a marked contrast with the incompetent design of some of the lesser parts, such as the dolphins around Bellerophon. The surrounding ornamental patterns too are irregularly laid out. It seems likely that several hands are at work: a master craftsman, itinerant and perhaps immigrant, responsible for the main figures, and a group of presumably local craftsmen, of a much lower level of competence.

Some British mosaics, especially from the northern regions of the province, can undoubtedly be attributed to semi-skilled craftsmen whose ambition outran their abilities. One is the panel with the Wolf and Twins, from the little town of Isurium Brigantum (Aldborough), in Yorkshire²⁹ (figure 98). The quintessentially Roman subject is executed in a style of the utmost naïveté, the she-wolf grinning at the spectator above the tiny figures of Romulus and Remus floating beneath her belly. Unfortunately nothing is recorded of the setting of the panel; but the subject must have recommended itself to the patron as a mark of loyalty and devotion to Rome, regardless of the abilities of the craftsmen whom he patronised. Equally interesting is a mosaic from a villa at Rudston, in East Yorkshire³⁰ (figure 99). This is laid out in the scheme of a central circle between semi-circles and quarter-circles, seen already at Fishbourne and at Hinton St Mary; here it is outlined in a very loosely rendered and, in places, clumsy guilloché. In the central circle is a female figure with swollen abdomen and diminutive legs, stick-like fingers and wild hair, recognisable – just – as Venus by the mirror and apple that she holds. Beside her is a small Triton with a torch, his face and body almost shapeless. The three surviving figures of hunters in the interstices around the circle are just as amorphous, as is a bust of Mercury between plants (vines?) in an adjacent panel. Four animals, a lion, stag, leopard, and bull, in the semi-circles, and birds in the quarter-circles, are only

though he has subsequently withdrawn the attribution to the Petruarian school. Some doubts have been expressed as to the mosaic's authenticity (D. Neal, *Mosaic* 9, 1983, 3–4), but I do not find them convincing.

³⁰ D. Smith, *Roman Mosaics at Hull* (2nd edn, Hull 1987), 9–13, and 26–8 on date; Smith, *Villa* 95, 107, pl. 3.20; Neal, *Roman Mosaics* 92–3, no. 66; Toynbee, *Art in Britain* 287–8, pl. LXIV; D. Johnston, 'The Rudston Venus: an interpretation', *Mosaic* 14, 1987, 11–17.



98 Isurium Brigantum (Aldborough), mosaic of Wolf and Twins. Leeds City Museum. c. 1.37 m × 1.33 m. Probably fourth century AD.

marginally more skilfully drawn. Colour is used boldly, in broad contrasting areas. The mosaic is clearly the work of a craftsman unacquainted with classical traditions of draughtsmanship, though with a certain primitive vigour. But subject-matter and iconography all belong in the traditional classical repertory. Moreover two of the animals, the lion and bull, are identified by inscriptions giving their names; the letters suggest that the mosaicist may have been at best semi-literate, but the ultimate model seems to be the amphitheatre mosaics of North Africa.³¹ The mosaic is usually dated to the mid-fourth century, later than a series of more conventionally competent mosaics from the same site. Recently, however, Smith has suggested that it might be earlier than the others, laid perhaps at the end of the third century at a time when trained mosaicists were not available. Whatever the date, like the Aldborough Wolf and Twins the Venus mosaic shows how a subject totally Roman in origin was adopted in these remote parts of the empire, and presumably prized by its owner, even when classical standards of style and execution were entirely absent.

In general, the fourth-century mosaics of Britain present

³¹ TAVRVS OMICIDA and [LEO] F[R]AMMEFER; for possible African influence, see Johnston, *ibid.*, 11–17, citing especially the crescent-on-stick above the back of the bull, which is associated with amphitheatre scenes on some African mosaics. See below, ch. 7, n. 40.

³² Smith, *Villa* 103; Smith, *Roman Mosaics* (cit. n. 30), 36–7, figs. 17–18, with refs.

³³ R. Ling, 'Brading, Brantingham and York: a new look at some fourth-century mosaics', *Britannia* 22, 1991, 148–53, pls. XIV–XIX,

a remarkable picture of the Romanisation of its wealthier inhabitants and their attachment to classical culture. In the villas it was evidently fashionable to commission a mosaic pavement; some owners could afford only one, usually in the main reception or dining-room, but many have several, though Woodchester with its twenty was exceptional. Naturally the majority are geometric; but a surprisingly high proportion have figured scenes. Only a few examples are found of the realistic and contemporary repertory popular in many parts of the western empire at this time: the amphitheatre, the hunting field, the circus (though there is a fine circus-race from Horkstow, in Lincolnshire³²), or the cycle of scenes of life on a great estate. Instead, there are a large number of mythological scenes and figures; and though many are common subjects throughout the empire, some are unusual. The literary atmosphere of the Vergilian mosaics has already been discussed. Among other rare subjects may be mentioned those of the villa at Brading, on the Isle of Wight, which include Ceres and Triptolemus, protectors of agriculture, an astronomer with a sun-dial, and a mysterious creature with a cock's head, usually identified as a deity who appears on magical amulets, the so-called Abraxas (though he lacks the snake legs which always characterise the latter, and may be nothing more than the fantastic product of folk-tale).³³ The absence of the contemporary subjects which elsewhere appealed so strongly to the patrons as a mark of status may be due to a lack of appropriate models; but it looks as though status also depended, more perhaps than it did in more central areas, on an ability to display one's familiarity with traditional classical culture.³⁴

Figured and geometric mosaics in Britain alike demonstrate the extent to which the visual culture of Rome had imposed itself upon the island. Here, as elsewhere in the western empire, the technique of mosaic was an alien import, which brought with it not only its own repertory of designs but also the style in which they were executed; when the mosaicists learnt the skills of their craft, they learnt the artistic language that went with it. Representational art in general was foreign to the pre-Roman

rightly rejecting the mystical and symbolic interpretations that have been proposed for the mosaics.

³⁴ Cf. D. Smith, 'Mythological figures and scenes in Romano-British mosaics', in Munby and Henig, *Roman Life and Art* (cit. n. 12), 105–58, pls. 6.1–xxxiii; R. Stupperich, 'A reconsideration of some fourth-century British mosaics', *Britannia* 11, 1980, 289–301, with additional note by R. Ling, *Britannia* 12, 1981, 292–3.



99 Rudston, Venus mosaic. Hull and East Riding Museum. c.4.67 m × 3.20 m. Perhaps end of the third or mid-fourth century AD.

culture of Britain; but whereas in some other media (sculpture for instance) works which represent a fusing of Celtic and Roman traditions appear alongside the more purely classical, there is virtually no sign of Celtic influence on the mosaics. It is true that none of them belong in the full tradition of Graeco-Roman naturalism: even in the second century tendencies to abstraction and schematisation were present. Figures on the fourth-century mosaics are flat and linear, with colour applied in broad stripes; anatomical errors or distortions are frequent. But these are tendencies which derive from the technical procedures of mosaic; they cannot be compared to the way in which figures themselves become abstract pattern, as in the Celtic manuscripts of the early Middle Ages. The extreme examples of non-classical figure-style, such as the Rudston Venus, demonstrate that neither the

mosaicists nor, presumably, their patrons, placed a high value on naturalism; but these figures are in no way subordinated to an overall patterning. A love of elaborate ornament can indeed be seen on the geometric mosaics; but it is a symmetrical, repetitive ornament derived almost entirely from the Graeco-Roman repertory. Although strongly imbued with a distinctive provincial style, the mosaics of Roman Britain belong to the same world as those of the rest of the western empire.

Bibliography

Smith, *CMGR* 1, 95–116; Smith, *Villa*; Smith, *CMGR* 11, 269–90; Smith, *CMGR* 111, 357–80; Toynbee, *Art in Britain*, 228–89; Neal, *Roman Mosaics*.

The North African provinces

I

The Latin-speaking provinces of Roman North Africa ran from Tripolitania in the east to the Atlantic coast of Mauretania. Mosaics have been preserved here in greater numbers than in any other region of the empire. This is in part due to the accidents of survival, resulting from both a favourable climate and the absence of modern towns of any size on top of many of the ancient sites. But it also reflects the enormous prosperity of these provinces, especially Africa Proconsularis, under the Roman Empire, and the wealth and importance of the towns that crowded their territory. This wealth found expression both in the construction of public monuments and in the decoration of elaborate private houses, where the members of a highly Romanised upper class asserted their status and their cultural values. The quantity of mosaics was for long not matched by thorough and accurate publication; and the lack of secure evidence for dating from older excavations has left much of the chronology dubious and often controversial. The older inventories give little more than lists, usually of mosaics (or parts of mosaics) divorced entirely from their setting; and publication usually concentrated upon the figured scenes, often leaving ornamental mosaics unrecorded.¹ Since the 1960s several projects have aimed at collecting all the mosaics from whole cities, or substantial areas of them, and studying them as far as possible in their architectural and archaeological context; among the sites covered in this way are Utica, Thuburbo Maius, and parts of Thysdrus (El Djem)

and Bulla Regia in Africa Proconsularis, and Thamugadi (Timgad) and part of Cuicul (Djemila) in Numidia.² These, together with the publication of recent and more scientific excavations, have laid the basis for a better understanding of the development of mosaics in these regions, though many problems remain, especially with regard to chronology.³

The area was neither administratively nor culturally unified. Very different geographic and historical conditions affected the development of the wealthy agricultural regions of Africa Proconsularis (roughly equivalent to modern Tunisia) from those of the harsher mountainous districts of Numidia and Mauretania further west; different factors again shaped the histories of the great trading cities of the coast, especially those of Tripolitania, while the far west of Mauretania Tingitana (modern Morocco) was more closely linked to southern Spain. A broad cultural *koine* can be distinguished in the central areas, which permits the identification of a characteristically North African style of mosaic; but separate regional and local traditions existed, especially in the more remote areas. The following account will concentrate upon the central areas of Africa Proconsularis; some important sites and monuments from the other regions will be discussed separately in the later sections of the chapter.⁴

The use of mosaic in North Africa antedates the Roman conquest. Punic Carthage had its own flourishing tradition of pavements in a wide variety of types. Most common are pavements of mortar and aggregate, akin to the *signina* of Sicily and Italy. These are found in large

¹ *InvTun*, published in 1910, contains 1056 entries, very few of which are illustrated; it was followed by a supplement, ed. A. Merlin, in 1915. The companion volume, F. de Pachtère, *Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique* 111, *Afrique Proconsulaire, Numidie, Maurétanie (Algérie)* (Paris 1911), contains 458 entries.

² *CMT* 1 *Utique* 1–3; *CMT* 11 *Thuburbo Maius* 1–3; *CMT* 111 *Thysdrus* 1; R. Hanoune, *Recherches archéologiques franco-tunisiennes à Bulla Regia* 1v, *Les mosaïques* 1 (CEFR 28/1v, Rome 1980); Germain, *Timgad*; Blanchard-Lemée, *Djemila*.

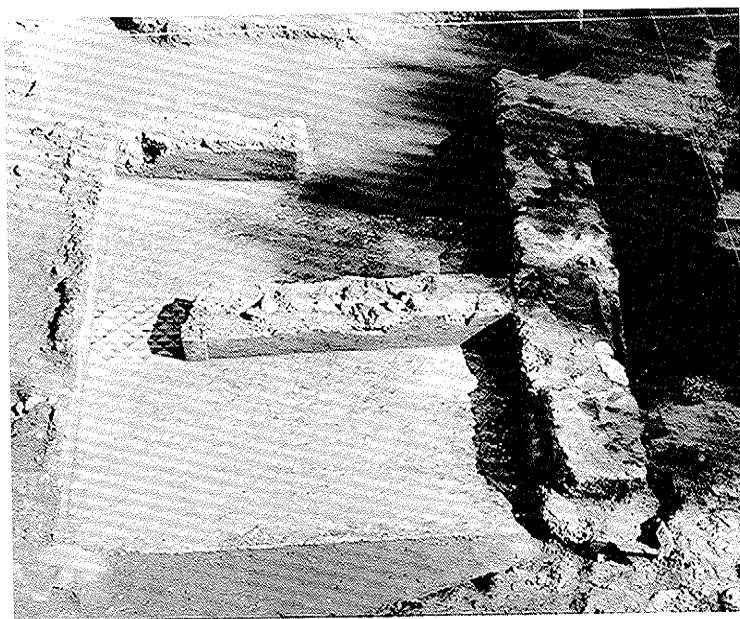
³ Darmon, *ANRW* 275–84, has questioned, with justification, the evidence for many of the dates traditionally accepted; unfortunately those (usually considerably later) which he proposes are no more

solidly founded. For a survey of the overall development cf. *ibid.*, 307–14; Dunbabin, *MRNA*, esp. 12–37. In this chapter I follow for the most part the traditional dating (though more cautiously than I did in *MRNA*), as indicating at least a relative chronology with a few fixed points; Darmon's late datings need stronger arguments before they can be accepted.

⁴ For an attempt to apply computer-based analysis to the ornamental mosaics of Africa Proconsularis, see K. Schmelzeisen, *Römische Mosaiken der Africa Proconsularis. Studien zu Ornamenten, Datierungen und Werkstätten* (Frankfurt am Main 1992). The method is promising, especially for the identification of workshops and their relationships, but needs further refining.



100 Kerkouane, Punic pavement of mortar and aggregate decorated with tesserae, including 'sign of Tanit'. First half of the third century BC.



101 Carthage, rue Astarte, Punic pavements of *opus figlinum* and tessellated threshold. First half of the second century BC.

⁵ M. Fantar, 'Pavimenta punica et signe dit de Tanit dans les habitations de Kerkouane', *Studi Magrebini* 1, 1966, 57-67; Fantar, *Kerkouane. Cité punique du Cap Bon* 1 (Tunis 1984), 493-514, pls. XLII-IV. For the 'sign of Tanit' see also above, ch. 2, ns. 11, 44.

⁶ S. Lancel, 'Les pavimenta punica du quartier punique tardif de la colline de Byrsa', *CahEtAnc* 17, *Carthage* 7 (Quebec 1985), 157-70, figs. 1-13 (with further refs.); F. Rakob, *Die deutschen Ausgrabungen in Karthago* (Karthago 1, Mainz am Rhein 1991), 220-5, pls. 49-53, 69-70; F. Chelbi, 'Découverte d'un habitat punique sur le flanc sud-est de la colline de Byrsa', *BAC* 17 n. 1981 (1984), 21-33, figs. 1-4.

⁷ H.G. Niemeyer et al., 'Die Grabung unter dem Decumanus Maximus von Karthago', *RömMitt* 100, 1993, 201-14, 241-3, pl. 55-4.

quantities in the little port town of Kerkouane, which was destroyed in the mid-third century BC, apparently by the Romans during the first Punic War. They are reddish pavements, the colour derived from the ceramic aggregate, the surface decorated with chips or regular tesserae. Occasionally these form motifs: three times thresholds are decorated for protection with the Punic religious and magical symbol known as the 'sign of Tanit', once flanked by fish⁵ (figure 100). The excavations of Punic Carthage itself have uncovered further examples of mortar-and-aggregate pavements, with a range of colours derived from the use of green, yellow or brown ceramic fragments in the aggregate. Other types found in Carthage include pavements of irregular chips, usually white; flat squares of terracotta, set like tesserae (sometimes called *opus figlinum*); fragments of polychrome limestone, like the *crustae*-pavements of Republican Italy; and regular tessellated mosaic. The last is not common, and its decoration is very limited: one house contains a threshold with a pattern of stepped triangles, red, black, and white (figures 101, 102); others are plain white. All these types are found in houses of the late third and first half of the second century BC; the simpler forms go back at least to the fourth.⁶ The recent discovery of a basin (perhaps serving a ritual purpose) dated to the fifth century BC, where the 'sign of Tanit' and a disk outlined with chips of limestone were set into the waterproof plaster, indicates that rudimentary forms of the technique were in use even earlier.⁷

Parallels between these pavements and those of Italy raise the question of the relationship between them. It has often been suggested that the reference to *pavimenta poenica* (Punic pavements) preserved in the fragment of a speech by Cato the Elder indicates that the Romans in the second century BC regarded pavements of this type as characteristic of Carthage,⁸ and the wide variety of types in use there looks like a local evolution. Mortar-and-aggregate pavements, plain and decorated, have been

⁸ Cato ap. Festus, *De verb. sig.* 282 Lindsay. Ph. Bruneau, 'Pavimenta poenica', *MEFRA* 94, 1982, 639-55, rejects the traditional reading, but retains the sense that Cato is attacking the use of pavements as a typical Carthaginian luxury; contra M. Gaggiotti, 'Pavimenta poenica marmore Numidico constrata', *Africa Romana* 5, 1987 (1988), 215-21, who identifies the term as referring to *signina*, especially those decorated with *crustae* of marble, which he believes to have been introduced to Rome and Latium by Carthaginian prisoners after the second Punic War.

found at other Punic sites elsewhere in Africa and in Sardinia and Sicily; it is tempting to see them as a Punic invention, whose use spread from the Punic cities of Sicily to the rest of the island, and thence to Italy. The rare examples of true tessellated mosaic in Carthage might either have evolved locally as the result of the regularisation of the chips and tesserae used in the mortar pavements, or have been influenced by Hellenistic Sicily: perhaps a mixture of the two.⁹

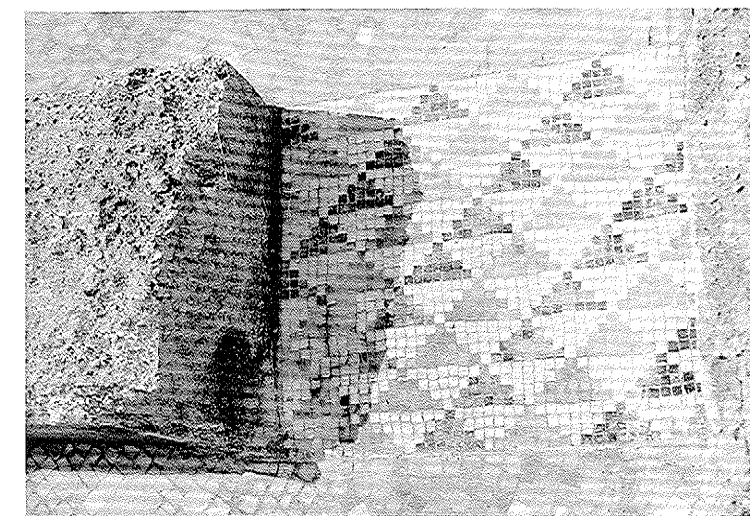
II

After the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC this tradition was interrupted, though it lingered in the surviving Punic cities such as Utica and Lepcis Magna. The process of Romanisation of the province after the conquest was at first slow, and little survives even from the first century AD to attest to the spread of private luxury in the Italian style. However, a few black-and-white mosaics with geometric designs comparable to those used in first-century Italy have been found in Carthage; and by the turn of the first to the second century AD simple black-and-white mosaics were appearing at Utica. Italian influence on these floors is unmistakable; the earliest examples must have been the work of craftsmen imported directly from Italy.¹⁰ In the early second century AD the growing frequency of such floors indicates the establishment of workshops in several centres on or near the coast: prominent are Thysdrus (El Djem), Hadrumetum (Sousse), and Acholla in the more southerly region known as Byzacena, as well as Utica. Their early works have been characterised by the name of 'Severe Style': austere black-and-white geometric designs, sometimes making a very restricted use of colour to enhance borders or individual motifs. Richer polychrome designs, again geometric, seem to be reserved for more important settings; the House of the Cascade at Utica shows a preference for *opus sectile* in the grandest rooms. The same house contains a fountain basin with a fishing

⁹ Cf. K. Dunbabin, 'Early pavement types in the west and the invention of tessellation', *CMGR* v, 26-40, with refs.; for Sicily see above, ch. 2, n. 11.

¹⁰ G.Ch. Picard, 'Les débuts de l'école africaine de mosaïque', *BAC* n.s. 12-14, 1976-78 (1980), n. 23-32; *CMT* 1 *Utique* 3, 68-9; K. Parlasca, 'Zu den italischen Beziehungen der frühkaiserzeitlichen Mosaik-kunst Nordafrikas', *150-Jahr-Feier Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom*, 1979 (*RömMitt-EH* 25, Mainz 1982), 196-201.

¹¹ *CMT* 1 *Utique* 1, 27-9, no. 28, pls. ix, xxv, lxiii; the upper part of the fountain is a later addition. *Opus sectile*: *ibid.*, 25-6, nos. 25, 27. The



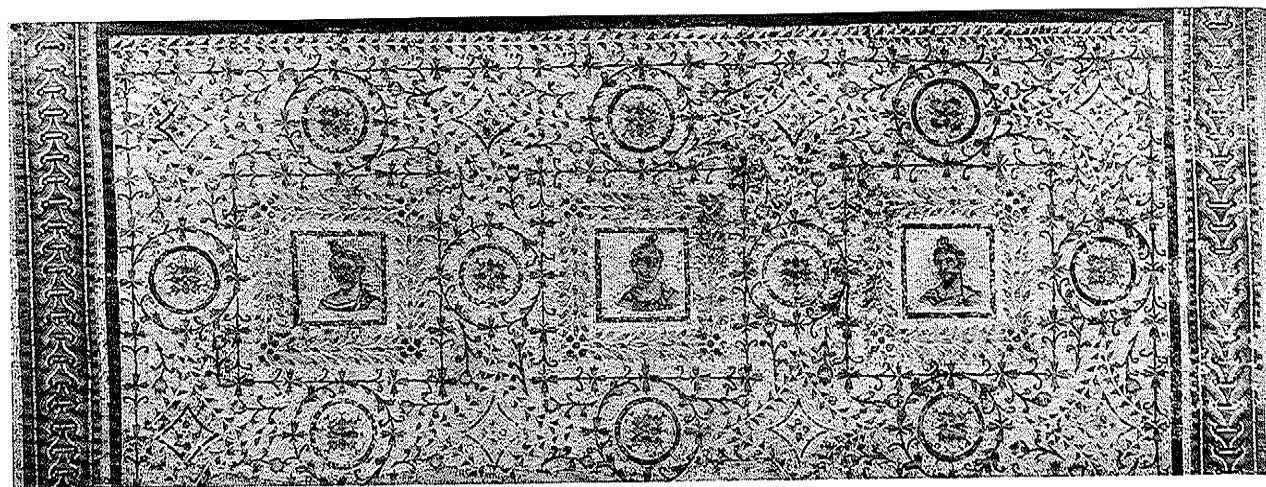
102 Carthage, rue Astarte, Punic pavements, detail of tessellated threshold. 0.50 m × 0.53 m. First half of the second century BC.

scene executed in tesserae of marble and glass, which reflects the traditions of *emblemata*.¹¹ Otherwise figured designs appear to be absent at this stage, apart from the exceptional and problematic mosaics of the villa at Zliten discussed below; black-and-white silhouette designs like those of Italy are very rare.

Black-and-white mosaics continued to be used where simpler or cheaper decoration was desired throughout the following centuries; but the mainstream of North African mosaics after the early second century was polychrome. A rich supply of coloured limestone and marble is available in most parts of North Africa, especially the yellows, pinks and ochres of the marble quarries of Simitthus (Chemtou), the ancient *marmor numidicum* (modern giallo antico); these and limestones in similar shades, together with olive green, give the mosaics of Proconsularis their characteristic tonality.¹² Every sort of geometric design is rendered in polychromy; the first specifically African style that can be distinguished is the Floral Style, where an underlying geometric framework is elaborated by the addition of stylised vegetal elements. (see also figure 301) The antecedents again are Italian, the black-and-white floral arabesques found in Hadrian's

phase of the house to which they belong is placed in *CMT* 1 at the end of the first to beginning of the second century AD; for reservations about the system of dating, see the reviews by M. Donderer, *Gnomon* 50, 1978, 395-400; J.-P. Darmon, *BullAIEMA* 7, 1978, 330-5.

¹² Cf. R. Gnoli, *Marmora romana* (2nd edn, Rome 1988), 166-8, figs. 122-4; G. Röder, 'Numidian marble and some of its specialities', in N. Herz, M. Waelkens eds., *Classical Marble: Geochemistry, Technology, Trade* (NATO ASI series E, vol. 153, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1988), 91-6; J. Röder in: F. Rakob ed., *Simitthus* 1, *Die Steinbrüche und die antike Stadt* (Mainz am Rhein 1993), 17-20.



103 Carthage, Floral Style design with busts of Muses. British Museum, London. 4.13 m × 1.51 m. Probably second half of the second century AD.

Villa and at Ostia in the 120s to 130s.¹³ Mosaics based on these designs but in colour appear in several centres of the coastal region of Byzacena, probably not very long after their introduction in Italy; they continued to be characteristic of the region well into the third century, with a tendency to ever greater elaboration which takes them far from the elegant simplicity of their original models. Though the workshops of Byzacena are the best known at this period, related designs were also used at sites in the more northern part of the province. In Carthage, for instance, a design is found based on an intricate pattern of vine-tendrils and other vegetal elements, which was also adopted, presumably under the influence of Carthaginian workshops, at Thugga (Dougga), and outside Africa at Lilybaeum (Marsala) in Sicily¹⁴ (figure 103; see also figure 133).

The first site where the new style can be appreciated is Acholla, a small town on the coast of Byzacena, where a series of houses and two big bath buildings have been excavated. The most remarkable mosaics are those in the so-called Baths of Trajan, which should probably be dated a decade or two later than Trajan.¹⁵ They contained pavements with geometric designs in limited polychromy, and one in the simpler Floral Style as defined above. But the great pavement of the *frigidarium* introduced something new (figure 104). It was divided into a main section flanked by rectangles on the two short sides: one rectangle and nearly half the central section

survived. The main section is marked out into a series of concentric friezes surrounding trapezoidal panels at the centre, all divided by bands on the diagonals; while the rectangle has concentric friezes around a longitudinal strip, with a panel at the centre. The composition appears to reflect the design of vaults, a cross-vault over the main area, barrel-vaults over the two adjoining rectangles; the size of the rooms makes it likely that they were indeed covered in this way, although practically nothing is left of the architectural structure. The resemblance to vault decoration is strengthened by some of the decorative motifs used. The dividing bands contain candelabrum-like motifs which combine floral scrolls, heraldic animals, and grotesque little mannikins, half-human, half-vegetal (figure 105). Similar candelabra appear in Fourth Style Pompeian painting, where they almost certainly derive from the 'grotesques' of the Golden House of Nero; they also occur, in similar if not identical form, among the patterns used in the wall mosaics of fountains and *nymphaea* of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the last decades before AD 79.¹⁶ Between these bands run figured friezes, also recalling the friezes on some of the wall mosaics. In the main section, the outer frieze shows a battle of centaurs and wild beasts, while the inner trapezoidal panels contain satyrs and maenads. In the long rectangle, the encircling frieze is marine, with Nereids and sea-monsters; medallions inserted into the middle strip contain busts of the

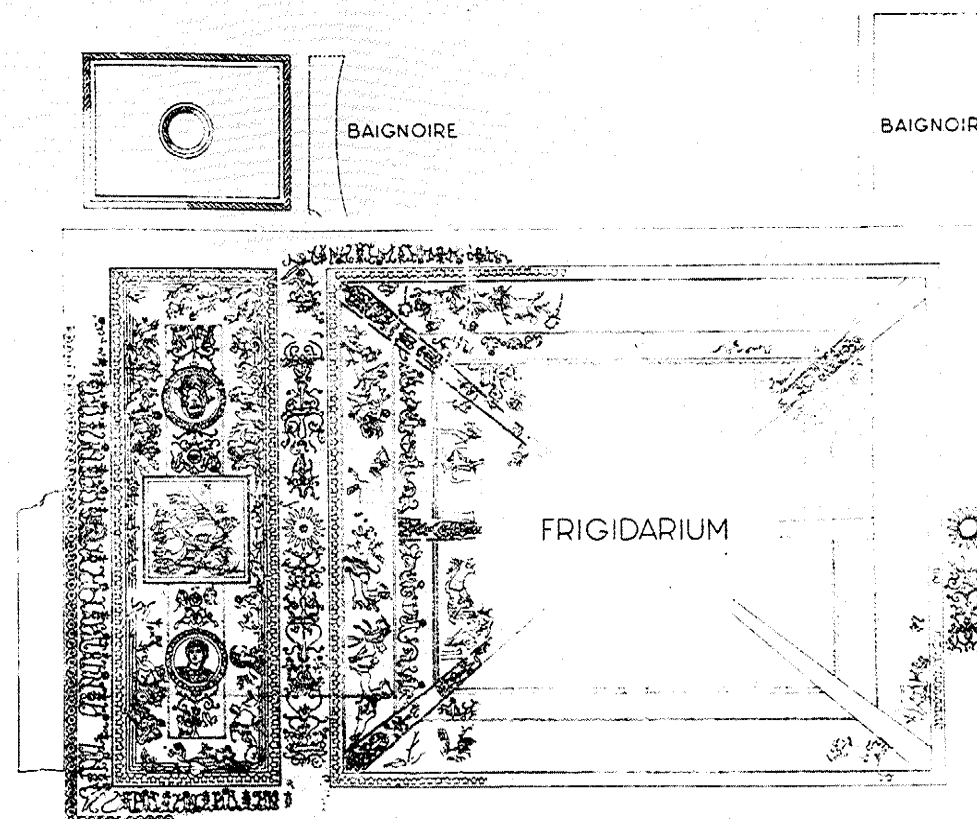
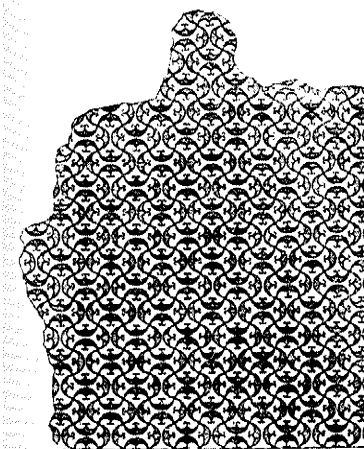
and Ostia; a slight time-lag might be allowed, but they are not likely to be as late as the Severan period, as suggested by Darmon, *ANRW* 278.

¹⁶ Cf. Picard, *ibid.*, with refs. For the wall mosaics, see below, ch.14, ns.22–4; for the Golden House, see N. Dacos, *La découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques de la Renaissance* (London–Leiden 1969), 13–41.

¹³ G.Ch. Picard, 'Un thème du style fleuri dans la mosaïque africaine', *CMGR* 1, 125–35, figs.1–14; for the Italian antecedents, cf. ch.4, ns.22, 35.

¹⁴ Picard, *ibid.*, 128–9; R.J.A. Wilson, 'Roman mosaics in Sicily: the African connection', *AJA* 86, 1982, 417, pl.51, and cf. ch.8, n.4.

¹⁵ G.Ch. Picard, 'De la Maison d'Or de Néron aux thermes d'Acholla', *Mon Piot* 63, 1980, 63–104. Picard dates the first phase of the baths c.120–30, on the basis of parallels with the mosaics of Hadrian's Villa



104 Acholla, Baths of Trajan, drawing of *frigidarium*. Main section 10.55 m × 8.90 m. Mid-second century AD.

Seasons, while the central panel has a self-contained scene of the Triumph of Dionysus in a chariot drawn by centaurs, isolated against a plain white ground.

The combination of a type of composition without parallel on floor mosaics in either Africa or Italy, and of motifs derived from the earlier repertory of wall and vault decoration, makes it likely that the whole floor depends upon the traditions of wall mosaic. Some elements are more appropriate to a pavement, such as the absence of glass tesserae and the more regular technique; but much of the design is executed in tones of golden yellow limestone, which produce an effect similar to that of gilded stuccoes on a white ground. We may perhaps guess that the new style was introduced, not only in direct imitation of the decoration of walls or vaults, but very probably by craftsmen trained in that technique.

More typical products of the Acholla workshops can be

seen in the houses that have been excavated there. Best known is the House of the Triumph of Neptune, whose complete mosaic decoration was laid out in a single phase datable c. AD 150–170. Figured mosaics, of fine execution, are used in the three main reception rooms; Floral Style designs in other areas where a richer effect is desired, such as the *cubica* (bedrooms) (figure 106; see also figure 309). Almost all the other rooms have geometric mosaics, ranging from elaborate polychrome designs to simple black-and-white, in a hierarchy of decoration that clearly depends upon the function and importance of the room.¹⁷

The workshop responsible for the Acholla mosaics was also active at Thysdrus (El Djem); several patterns popular here and at other sites in the vicinity have been identified as characteristic of its work.¹⁸ The House of the Dionysiac Procession at Thysdrus appears to belong to a phase intermediate between the Baths of Trajan and the

¹⁷ Gozlan, *Maison de Neptune*, esp.265–82. For the adaptation to the architecture, see below, ch.19, n.17. For another house at Acholla whose overall scheme of decoration is preserved, see S. Gozlan, 'Les mosaïques de la maison d'Asinius Rufinus à Acholla (Tunisie)', *CMGR* v, 161–71 (dated to the 180s AD).

¹⁸ S. Gozlan, 'Deux motifs de bordure sur des mosaïques de Byzacène', *Karthago* 17, 1976, 153–84, pls.xiii–xx; Gozlan, *Dossiers de l'archéologie* 31, 1978, 62–79. Cf. below, ns.28, 31, and ch.18, n.17. For other houses at Thysdrus see *CMT* III *Thysdrus* 1.



105 Acholla, Baths of Trajan, *frigidarium*, detail of central section with bands of grotesque figures and scrolls. Musée du Bardo, Tunis.

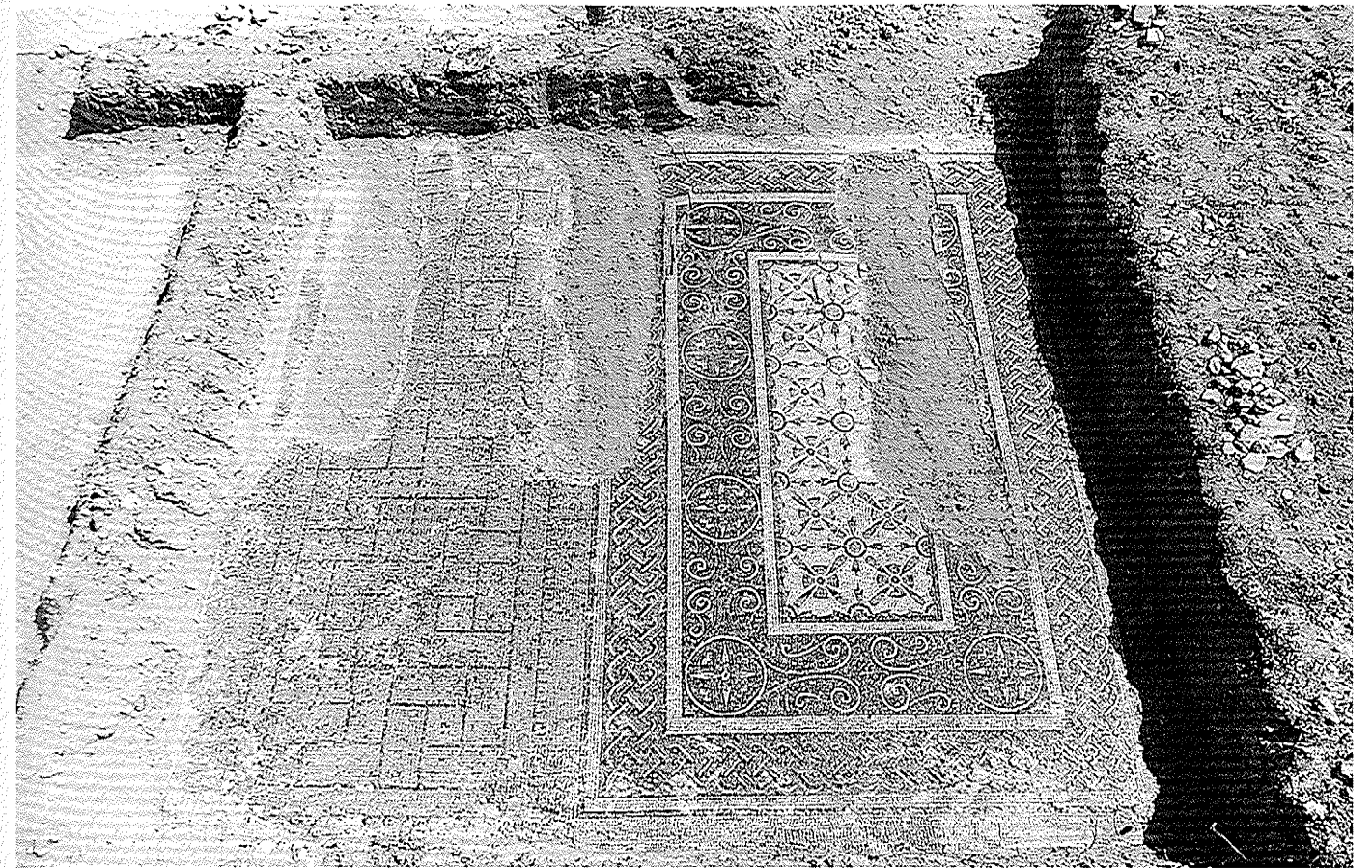
House of the Triumph of Neptune at Acholla¹⁹ (figure 107). Mosaics, all polychrome, cover large areas of the house, including the entrance and vestibule, the galleries of the peristyle, and a huge room opening off the peristyle which is marked out as a *triclinium*, an arrangement characteristic of the African houses. These constitute the public section of the house to which visitors would be admitted. A row of smaller rooms opening off a corridor along one side are also decorated with an opulence which suggests that they are intended for the reception of guests. The character of the mosaic is adapted to the nature of the various spaces. The vestibule has a textile-like design of rectangular tesserae in rainbow colours, striking but practical; the peristyle shows repetitive patterns of predominantly curvilinear designs with floral fillings. Some minor rooms have simple geometric designs, the main rooms elaborate floral designs, some including figures. In the *tri-*

clinium, a simpler pattern runs around three sides, where the couches would stand, and a richer floral design occupies the central area (figure 108). The main framework here is composed of intersecting laurel wreaths, forming spaces into which are inserted busts of the Seasons, Dionysiac figures, birds and fruit; while a border contains a vegetal scroll enclosing a great variety of animals. In addition there is a figured panel at the entrance, with the Dionysiac Procession from which the house is named, and two panels with animal fights at the ends of the areas for the couches. The whole forms a T+U arrangement, the typical lay-out of a *triclinium*.

Throughout the house, both the geometric and the floral pavements create a sense of airiness and elegance. The designs are traced in fine lines which leave much of the white background showing; the floral elements are drawn equally lightly, without proliferation of detail. The

been widely accepted. For the relationship between its mosaics and those of the House of the Triumph of Neptune, see Gozlan, *Maison de Neptune* 278–80; the differences between the two complexes should not necessarily be read as a chronological evolution.

¹⁹ Foucher, *Maison de la Procession*; D. Parrish, 'The mosaic program of the "Maison de la Procession dionysiaque" at El Jem', in Y. Duval ed., *Mosaïque romaine tardive* (Paris 1981), 51–65, pls. viii–ix; Parrish, *Season Mosaics*, 147–56, nos. 25–8, pls. 35–41. Foucher proposed a date c. 140–60 on the grounds of style; this, or a decade or two later, has



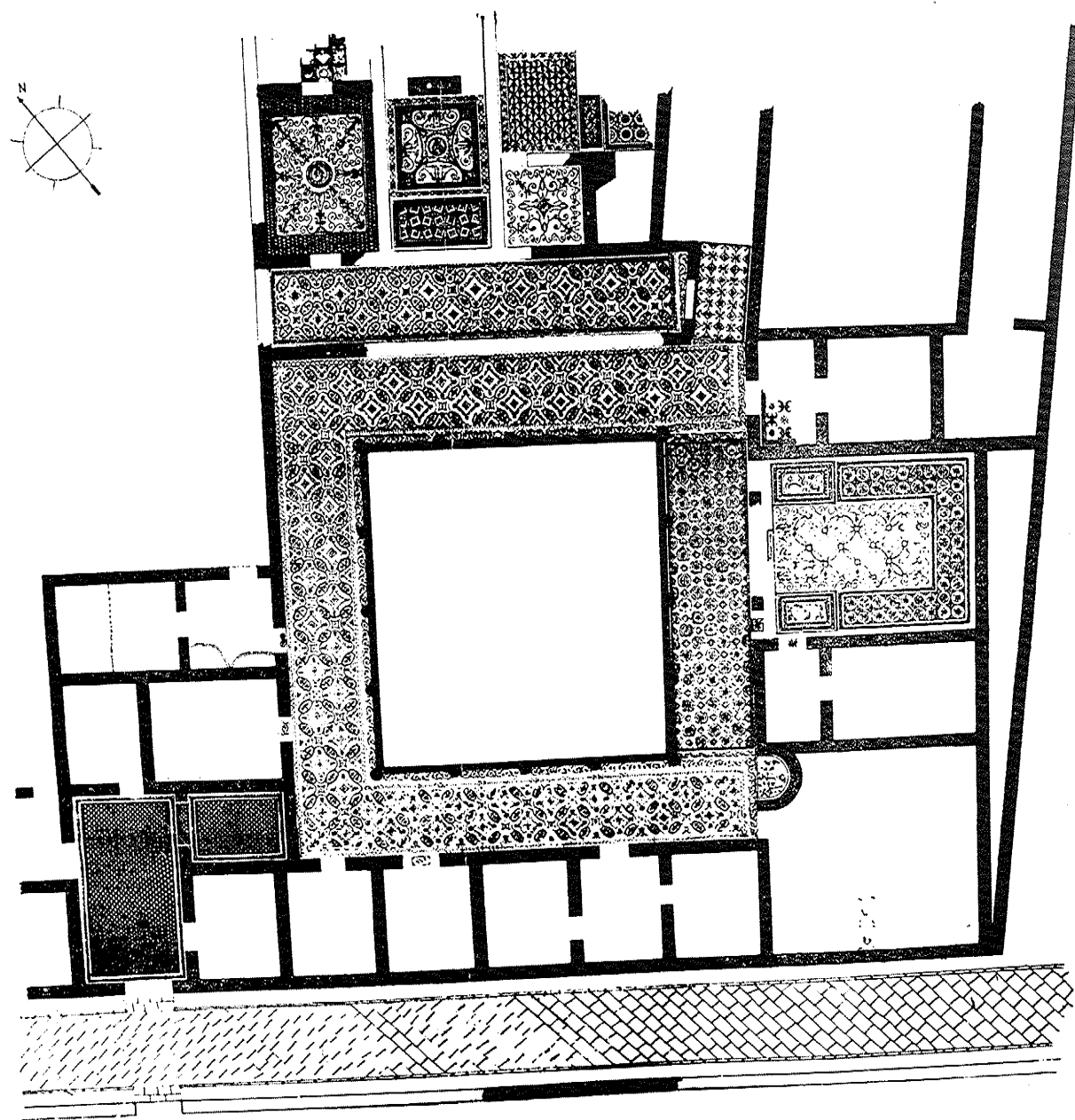
106 Acholla, House of the Triumph of Neptune, *cubiculum* xxxii. Overall dimensions of room 3.80 m × 3.45 m. c. AD 150–170.

small figures of animals and birds are executed with great fineness and delicacy, and introduce a lively variety. In one of the side rooms, the whole floor is covered with vegetal designs, unfolding freely in a series of more or less symmetrical scrolls, which enclose busts of the Seasons and other figures; a central medallion contains a male bust crowned with fruit, probably representing the god of the year (figure 109, plate 16). Again the design recalls that of a vaulted ceiling or dome, though less insistently than in the Baths of Trajan at Acholla.

By the turn of the second to third centuries mosaic was widespread throughout Proconsularis, and even in small cities it is found lavishly in wealthy private houses and public buildings such as baths. Its use continued with little sign of abatement through the third century and into the fourth, which was one of the most prosperous periods of the more central African provinces. Carthage at this time could claim to be the second or third city of the empire, and her position was reflected in the luxury of private houses and their decoration. There is no doubt that the mosaic workshops of Carthage held a dominant position over the whole surrounding area, and their

influence can be identified even overseas, in Sicily and Sardinia.²⁰ In the course of this period, the delicate elegance which distinguished the second-century mosaics just discussed gradually gave way to an ornamental style marked instead by profusion and elaboration. In place of fine lines, the designs are outlined by broad bands ornamented with motifs such as the guilloche, wavy ribbon, or broken meander; details proliferate; very little of the white background is left visible; and often broad areas of colour contrast richly (figure 110). A favourite element is the awning pattern, like sections of a richly embroidered curtain, often used to surround medallions or octagons (figure 111). Designs based on vegetal elements continue, but they are heavier and more rigid. Especially common is the use of laurel wreaths to outline the design, with leaves set densely on a red or green background, in contrast to the sparse groups of leaves on a white ground used in similar patterns earlier. This evolution was of course not uniform; the more austere type of simple repetitive patterns continued to be used at all periods,

²⁰ See below, ch. 8, ns. 5, 26.



107 Thysdrus, House of the Dionysiac Procession, plan. Mid-second century AD.

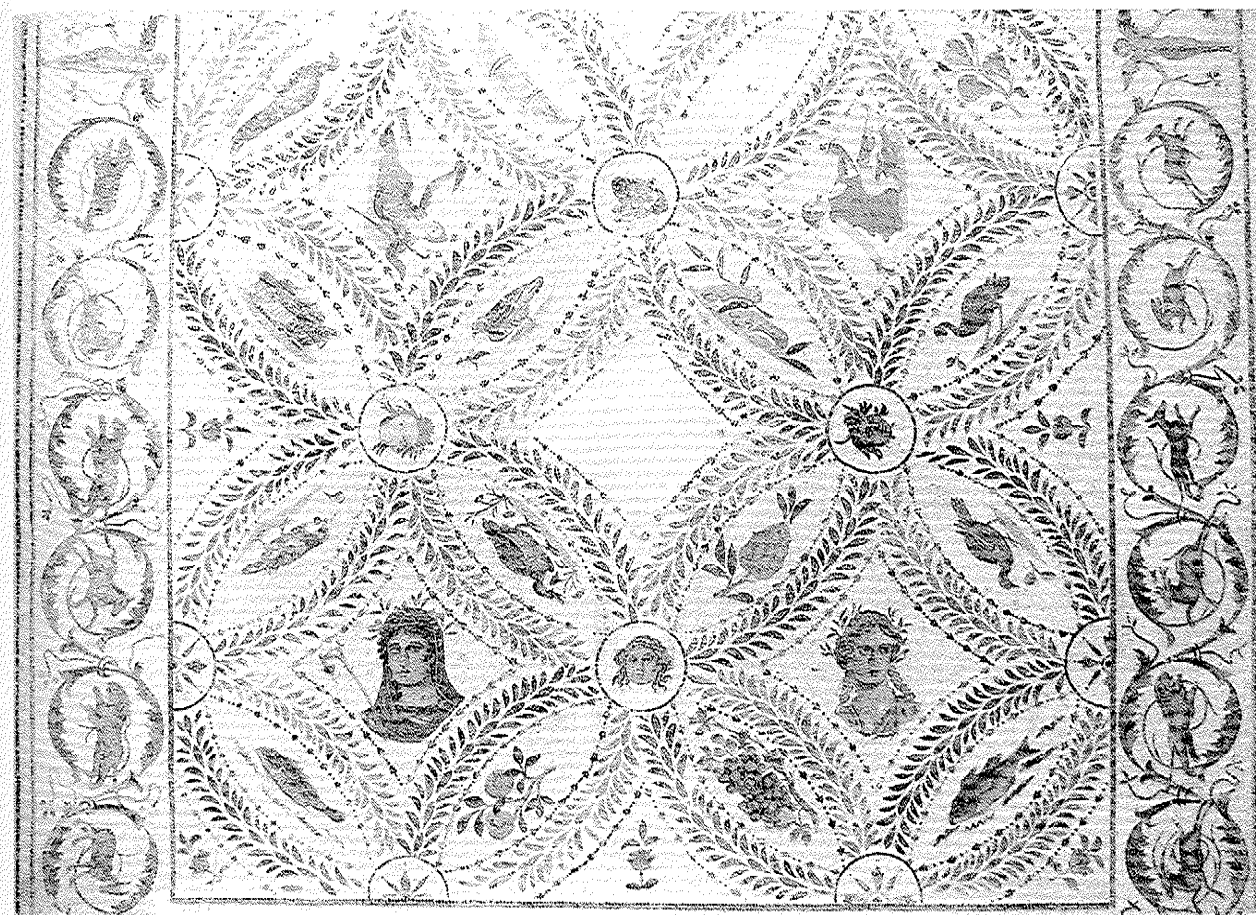
and patterns of taste fluctuated both chronologically and regionally.²¹

A group of mosaics dating from the fourth century shows the process fully accomplished. The building called the House of the Protomai at Thuburbo Maius is com-

²¹ For a summary of the evolution at the site of Thuburbo Maius, see CMT II, *Thuburbo Maius* 4, 145–64; the majority of the mosaics date from the late second to the early fifth centuries. For an attempt to analyse the broader fluctuations of ornamental style, see Schmelzeisen, *Römische Mosaiken* (cit. n. 4); much further work is needed.

²² CMT II, *Thuburbo Maius* 3, 1–60, nos. 258–86, figs. 1–2, plans 2–5; A. Ben Abed, 'A propos des mosaïques de la Maison des Protomés à Thuburbo Maius', *CMGR* III, 291–8.

posed of two distinct sections, each with its own peristyle; several rooms, including a luxurious triconch, were evidently designed for dining and the reception of guests, and all the major and most of the minor rooms were paved with mosaics (plate 17). The construction of the house appears to have a *terminus post quem* in the first quarter of the fourth century; the majority of the mosaics are probably to be placed somewhat later in that century, perhaps in its second half.²² Two of the main reception rooms contained mosaics with bands of laurel wreath marking out the design, forming patterns of hexagons or circles; within these compartments is placed a wide assortment of motifs.

108 Thysdrus, House of the Dionysiac Procession, detail of *triclinium*. El Djem Museum. Mid-second century AD.

In the first, these are fish, birds, baskets of fruit: images recalling the small gifts set before guests, which are known as *xenia*.²³ The other, after which the house is named, has the foreparts or *protomai* of beasts emerging from a leafy corolla; the beasts are those typically displayed in the amphitheatre, lion, leopard, bear, zebu, ostrich, antelope, and so on²⁴ (figure 112). The peristyle of one section of the house is paved with acanthus scrolls issuing from clumps in each corner, and spreading thick branches in roughly symmetrical curls along the sides; birds perch among them at intervals, a splendid peacock among them. The central area of the peristyle is also paved, with vine scrolls containing vintaging Erotes, while friezes of hunting animals fill the panels between the columns. The effect of the whole is of great luxuriance, with dense masses of vegetation in a few shades of green, and touches of red and

ochre; very little of the white background is left visible. Individual forms tend to be heavy and somewhat schematic, subordinated to the overall impact.²⁵

These vine and acanthus scrolls belong in a category of vegetal mosaics where the plants are not used to outline a geometric pattern, but spread out over the pavement in an apparently more natural manner. However there is a tendency in such designs for an artificial order to be imposed, with regular, near-symmetrical scrolls, analogous to the *rinceaux* of vine, acanthus and other plants which had long been a traditional border pattern. The scrolls in the later examples form regular medallions over the pavement, often enclosing figures or motifs: a type of pavement very common in the east in the Byzantine period, and of which an African example may be seen at the House of the Ass at Cuicul (Djemila) in Numidia.²⁶ In

²³ CMT II, *Thuburbo Maius* 3, 43–51, no. 278, pls. XX–XXIII, LIX. For *xenia*, cf. S. Gozlan, 'A propos de quelques pavements africains: les *xenia* et l'iconographie dionysiaque', in Y. Duval, *Mosaïque* (cit. n. 19), 73–87; *Recherches franco-tunisiennes sur la mosaïque de l'Afrique antique* I, *Xenia* (CEFR 125, Rome 1990).

²⁴ CMT II, *Thuburbo Maius* 3, 17–23, no. 263, pls. IX–XII, LVI, LVII.

²⁵ CMT II, *Thuburbo Maius* 3, 8–16, nos. 259–60, pls. II–VIII, LV.

²⁶ Blanchard-Lemée, *Djemila* 85–96, pls. XVI–XX. The date has been much discussed; Blanchard hesitates between the beginning of the fifth century and the mid-sixth. For eastern examples of the design see ch. 11, ns. 13, 20, 25.



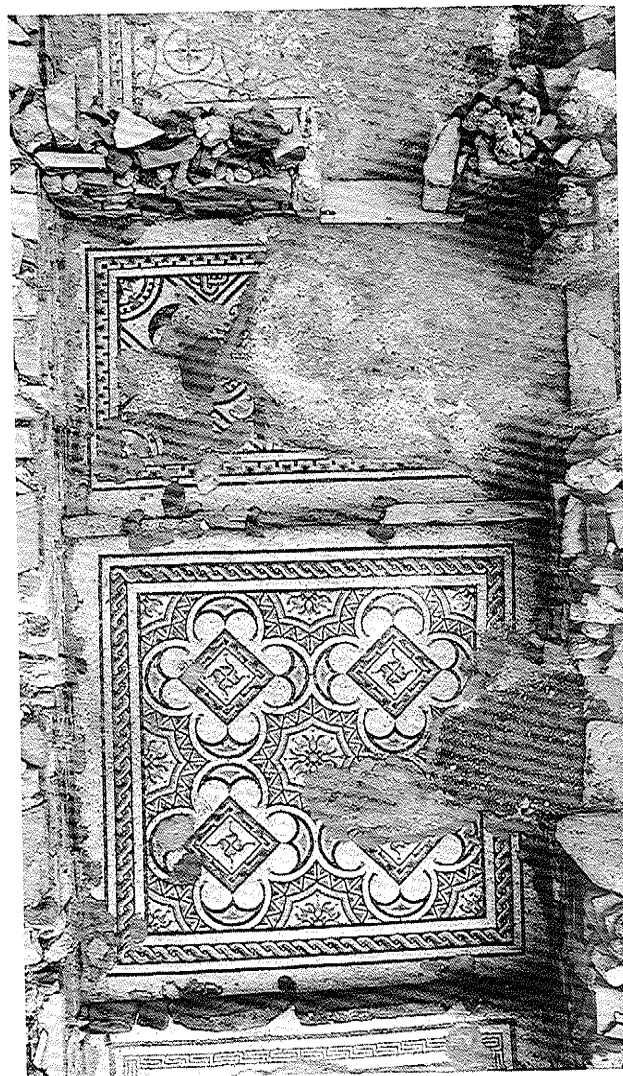
109 Thysdrus, House of the Dionysiac Procession, room A, vegetal designs with bust of personification of the year. El Djem Museum. 4.40 m × 5.90 m. Mid-second century AD.

contrast, another group of mosaics shows branches of foliage and flowers scattered freely over the surface, as if freshly cut; birds, animals, still-life motifs, and sometimes human figures appear among them.²⁷

III

The originality of the African mosaicists was not confined to their treatment of ornamental designs. Even more far-reaching was the revolution which they introduced in the handling of figured scenes; though it must be borne in mind that these constitute only a small proportion of the total. Here again various different elements contribute. A

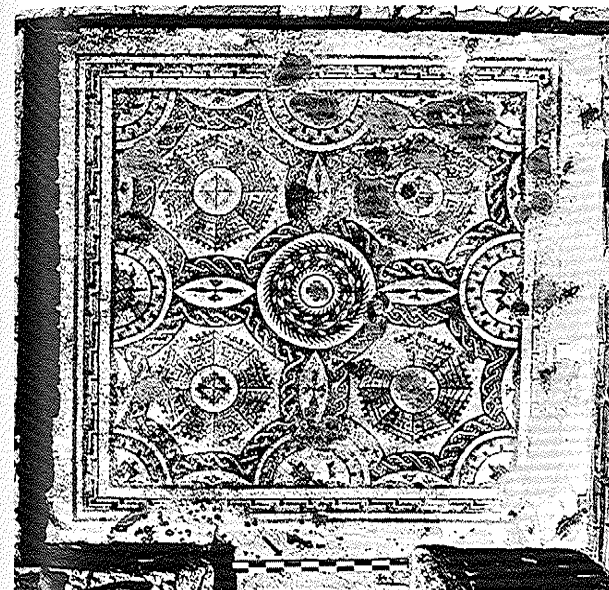
²⁷ S. Germain, 'Logique et fantaisie dans les mosaïques de jonchées', *AntAfr* 14, 1979, 171–6, no.4; A. Ennabli, W. Ben Osman, 'Etude des pavements de la villa de la Volière', *Hommages Stern*, 147–56, pls.LXXXIV–LXXXVII.



110 Thuburbo Maius, House with Domestic Quarters (Maison aux Communs), rooms XIII (at top) and XIV, geometric mosaics. Room XIV 3.10 m × 3 m. Third century AD.

certain number of *emblemata* of the traditional sort, comparable to those used in Italy from the Hellenistic period onwards, have been found in Africa. They were used either singly or in groups set into a larger ornamental design. For instance, sixteen panels form a Calendar with the four Seasons and the Months in the House of the Months at Thysdrus, set into a Floral Style frame of a type characteristic of the region of Thysdrus²⁸ (figure 113). Other, slightly larger, panels were laid on the spot, but preserve the basic concept of the single-viewpoint scene with its single theme and unified receding space. The

²⁸ Foucher, *Thysdrus* 1961 30–50, pls.xxxii–xxxiv; Parrish, *Season Mosaics* 156–60, no.29, pls.42–4; probably first third of third century. For the border see above, n.18. For *emblemata* see also below, n.48, on Zliten; and Dunbabin, *MRNA* 29, n.69.



111 Thuburbo Maius, House of Bound Animals, *cubiculum* IX, geometric mosaic. 3.15 m × 2.95 m. Third century AD.

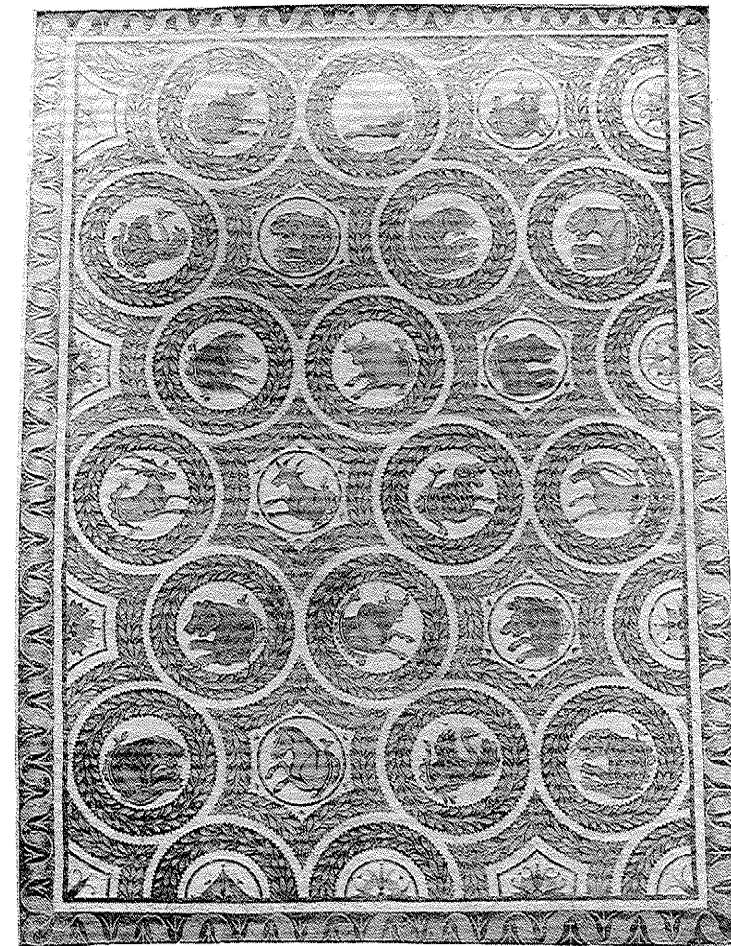
triclinium in the House of the Dionysiac Procession at Thysdrus contained three such panels: two with combats of wild beasts and the frieze with the Dionysiac Procession itself. All are larger than any *emblema*, and their different orientation offered various viewpoints for the guests as they entered the room; but each is conceived as a self-contained unit, with the figures moving in their own space. The rendering of depth, however, has begun to lose its coherence: the lions with their prey, though placed in a landscape setting, float above it, their feet not touching the ground.²⁹ Another method of composition, very common at all periods, places figures in the compartments formed by a geometric or floral pattern. Motifs treated in this way may be inanimate objects, complete or partial figures, or small groups; and they may be linked thematically, despite their formal separation.

Alongside these more traditional forms of composition, the African mosaicists also began to develop more original methods which treated the distribution of figures on the floor more freely.³⁰ The Italian silhouette mosaics of the second century offered in black-and-white a model for such free compositions; the adaptation of vault designs, as seen in the Baths of Trajan at Acholla, may have exercised an even stronger influence. Many of the new designs abandon the single viewpoint and spread the figures over the surface to face all four sides of a room. For instance, in the mosaic of Neptune and the Seasons from La Chebba

²⁹ Foucher, *Maison de la Procession* 57–63. The animal panels measure 1.80 m × 1.08 m, the procession frieze 2.54 m × 0.87 m.

³⁰ See the survey of the whole development in Lavin, 'Hunting pavements' 204–44.

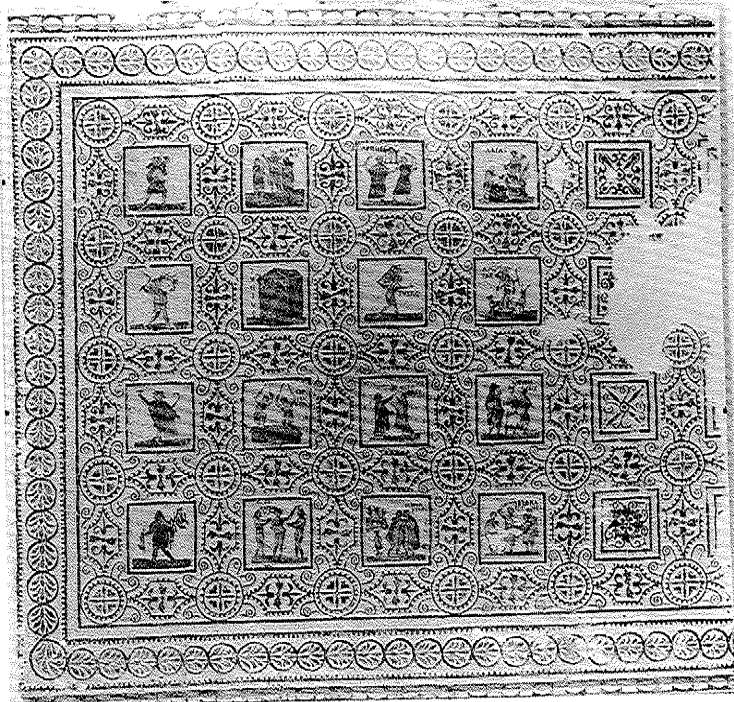
³¹ *InvTun* 86; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 20, 110, 254, pls.97–8; Parrish, *Season*



112 Thuburbo Maius, House of Protomai, room IX, mosaic of animal *protomai*. Musée du Bardo, Tunis. 6.60 m × 5.05 m. Probably second half of the fourth century AD.

(north of Acholla) only the central medallion with Neptune advancing frontally in his *quadriga* retains traditional pictorial treatment (figure 114). Around it are distributed the four full-length figures of the Seasons, marking the diagonals, and along the sides little scenes of seasonal activities and animals. The plants which frame the Seasons intertwine to provide a decorative unity, but there is no formal link between the figures. Unlike the Italian silhouette mosaics, where the use of black-and-white automatically dematerialises the figures, the use of polychromy makes it possible to retain a degree of realism for the individual figures and a very limited indication of setting, even in a composition such as this. Thus the little figures along the sides cast shadows and move among thin strips of ground, from which grow the plants they harvest.³¹

Mosaics, 201–4, no.49, pls.66b–68. The border pattern links it with the products of Thysdrus and near-by Acholla: a later version of the same pattern is used on the Calendar mosaic at Thysdrus (above n.28; cf. S. Gozlan, *Karthago* 17, 1976, 155). It is usually placed c. AD 150.



113 Thysdrus, House of the Months, Calendar mosaic. Sousse Museum. 5.05 m × 4.0 m. First third of the third century AD.



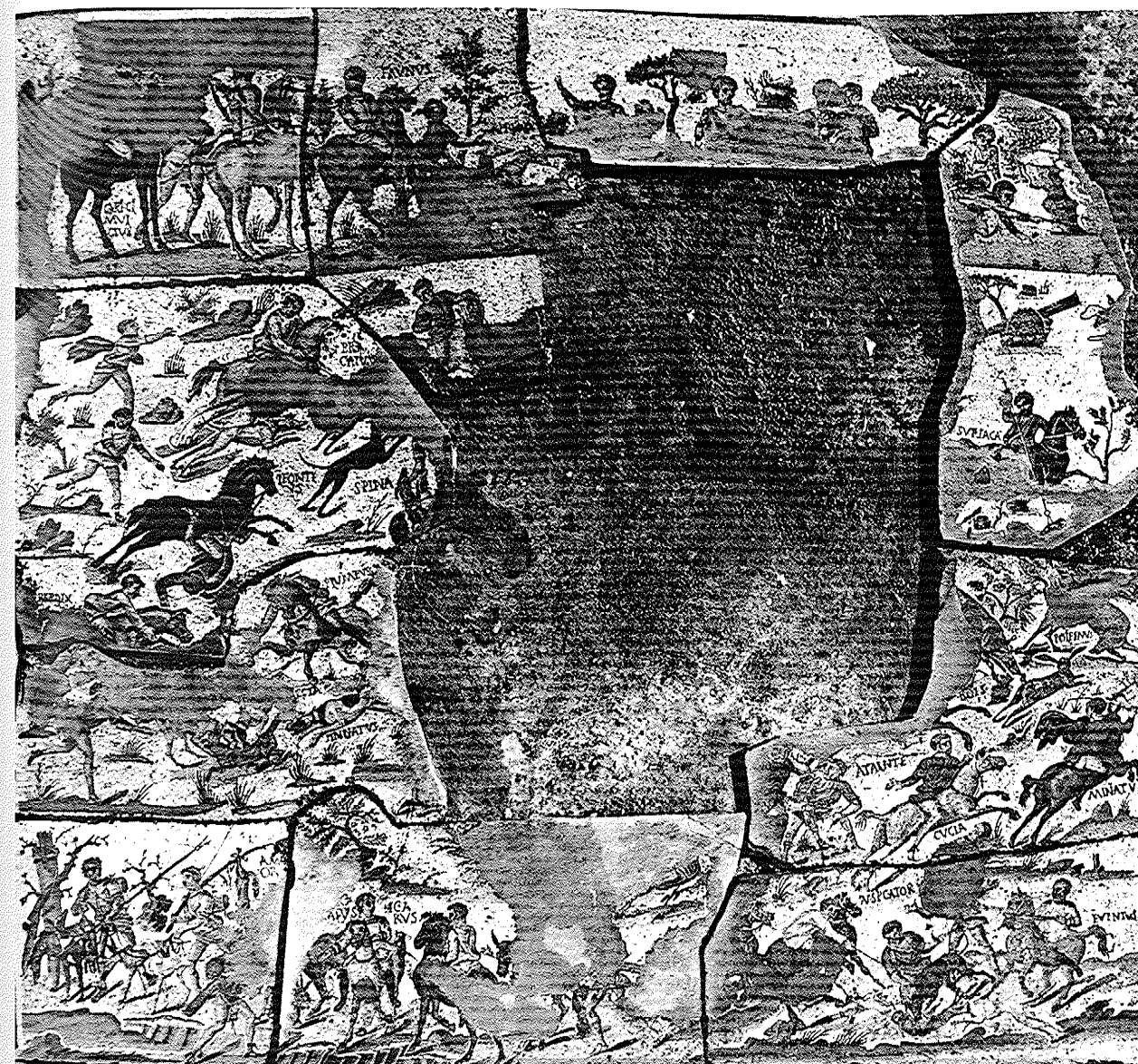
114 La Chebba, Neptune and the Seasons. Musée du Bardo, Tunis. 4.85 m × 4.90 m. Probably mid-second century AD.

Marine subjects were similarly treated in free all-over compositions derived from the Italian silhouette mosaics. Such scenes are extraordinarily popular, in private houses as well as in baths; the importance of the sea and its products for the prosperity of the African provinces was doubtless the cause. Their subjects include fish; scenes of boats and fishing, with humans or Erotes; and the mythological denizens of the sea, Nereids, tritons, sea-monsters, and the great sea-gods, Neptune, Amphitrite, and Oceanus himself, the last represented as a colossal mask from which water streams. The figures may be distributed around all the sides of a room, or set to be seen from a single angle; but only in a very few instances (among them the medallion with the Triumph of Neptune at La Chebba) is the sea itself treated illusionistically as a mass from which the figures emerge. Much more frequently it is rendered by broken zigzag lines filling the space between the figures; these may be irregular, to give the effect of a turbulent surface, or may be extremely regular and schematic.³²

Other themes required some indication of setting, and for these space was rendered with an ambiguity which became characteristic of the African figured mosaics. This treatment permitted the representation of landscape or architectural features and the portrayal of quite complex narratives, but freed the mosaicists from the demands imposed by a unified, consistently receding spatial setting. Although small figured panels always continued to be produced, huge panels occupying the greater part of a room were increasingly common. They often retain a single orientation for the figures, but distribute them in distinct groups; these may be separated formally by groundlines which divide the panel into registers, or may be spread more freely over the surface. The process may be seen most clearly on some of the hunting scenes which were especially common in the third and fourth centuries. One from Althiburus, in central Proconsularis, occupied the greater part of a reception room opening off the peristyle; it probably dates to the end of the third century³³ (figures 115, 116). Though damaged in the centre, the main composition is clear. Hunters on foot and horseback, with

³² Cf. for instance the Fish Mosaic in the House of Venus at Mactar (Mactar), of the late second to early third century: G.Ch. Picard, C. Picard, A. Bourgeois, C. Bourgeois, *Recherches archéologiques franco-tunisiennes à Mactar I, La Maison de Vénus I, Stratigraphies et étude des pavements* (CEFR 34, Rome 1977), 23–35, figs. 16–73.

³³ M. Ennaïfer, *La Cité d'Althiburos et l'Édifice des Asclepieia* (Tunis 1976), 109–27, no. 26, pls. cxvii–cxliii; Dunabin, *MRNA* 50.



115 Althiburus, Hunting Scenes. 5.87 m × 5.22 m. Probably end of the third century AD.

their hounds, are engaged in the hunt of a variety of small game in a landscape indicated by strips of groundline, trees, rocks and shrubs. They are arranged on approximately four superimposed registers, but only at top and bottom are these formally marked off by continuous strips of groundline; in between the figures are spread more freely, with the landscape elements scattered over the white ground wherever there is room for them. Sometimes the figures are arranged in such a way as to suggest receding space – for instance, one hunter is in three-quarter back-view, pursuing a hare placed above him; other elements are simply juxtaposed. A rough narrative sequence runs from the departure for the hunt, at the top left, to the return of the hunters at the bottom; but

intervening episodes are without connection. The result combines a free composition, which permits variety of action, with a certain degree of narrative realism. Names are written beside many of the horses and hounds, presumably to identify them as the real possessions of the owner of the house.

Some of the later figured mosaics retain the traditional pictorial concept of a single unified scene with its own space, but magnify it to a colossal scale, so that it covers the greater part of the floor. This treatment is found particularly with mythological scenes, and indicates a revived classicism which contrasts strongly with the fundamentally anti-classical approach of the majority of the mosaics discussed in the previous paragraphs.



116 Althiburus, Hunting Scenes, detail.

The best examples are a group of mosaics found in the House of the Nymphs at Neapolis (Nabeul).³⁴ The house has a *terminus post quem* of AD 316/317; how much later in the fourth century the mosaics are to be placed is uncertain. The ornamental mosaics are marked by an austerity which is also the mark of a certain classicism, in contrast to the taste for luxuriant opulence of decoration found frequently in the fourth century. Four rooms contained large figured panels, each with a single scene, occupying more than half the space of the room. The subjects are mythological: one shows Pegasus and the Nymphs, the others have rare or unique subjects whose identification has led to lively dispute. Darmon originally attempted to interpret them all as episodes in the myth of Bellerophon and Pegasus; but though one apparently shows the marriage of Bellerophon and Philonoe, another is more probably the scene from the opening of the Iliad where the priest Chryses begs

Agamemnon for the return of his daughter, and the last remains uncertain³⁵ (figure 117). The nearly life-size figures are arranged in depth, in a traditional pictorial way; but spatial ambiguities are present in the details. Where there is a landscape setting, as in the scene of Pegasus and the Nymphs, it shows the same techniques of composition as the hunting scenes discussed above, with rocks and shrubs floating against an otherwise plain white ground.

The figure-style in the House of the Nymphs is also classicising. Anatomy is not always correctly rendered, but the figures, especially the nudes, are powerfully modelled in chiaroscuro. The drapery sometimes models the forms of the bodies, but often turns into a pattern of stripes of contrasting shades; and linear outlines emphasise parts of the figures. The size of the tesserae in the figure scenes varies greatly (up to 300 per square decimetre, in contrast to an average of 100 to 150 in the geo-

official centre for the celebration of weddings, has been much disputed; see the reviews of M.-H. Quet, *RA* 1984, 79–104; M. Donderer, *Gnomon* 55, 1983, 69–73, whose interpretation of no.30 as Philoctetes on Lemnos has subsequently been accepted by Darmon, *BSNAF* 1989, 232–9.

³⁴ Darmon, *Nymfarum Domus*, for the date, see 134–9.

³⁵ Darmon, *Nymfarum Domus* 98–103, no.25, pls. xxxiv–xxxv, 1; 115–29, nos.30–2, pls. lxii–lxvi, lxxxiv–xc. The panels range in width from 2.90 to 3.20 m., in height from 1.40 to 2.20 m. Darmon's reading of the scenes and his associated interpretation of the whole house as imbued with the symbolism of marriage, and even as an



117 Neapolis, House of the Nymphs, Chryses before Agamemnon. Nabeul Museum. 2.90 m × 1.80 m. Fourth century AD.

metric portions); materials include glass, and give a wide range of colours.

As the mosaics of the House of the Nymphs demonstrate, there is no orderly progression in the development of figure-style in the African mosaics. Overall, a change took place from second-century naturalism, with classically correct, well-modelled, three-dimensional figures, to the schematic linear abstraction that typifies late antiquity; but the evolution was never unitary, and the pendulum of taste swung back and forth over a period of two to three centuries. Apart from imponderables such as the skill of the individual craftsmen and their greater or lesser conservatism, factors such as the existence of an earlier model affect the character of the work. So does the nature of the subject: a distinction may be drawn between a more popular tradition, responsible for the lively, somewhat squat little figures in a scene such as the Hunting Mosaic from Althiburus, and the more courtly or classicising current seen in the mythological scenes at Neapolis.

IV

Some idea of the range of subject-matter found in the African mosaics has been given by the works already discussed.³⁶ In one group are those which belong within the realm of traditional Graeco-Roman culture, though not always treated in a traditional way. Mythological scenes are usually rather stereotyped, repeating a few basic episodes of well-known myths; but there are also exceptional works, like the mosaics of the House of the Nymphs at Neapolis. The models for these rare themes must have been deliberately sought out, probably to satisfy the special requirements of a highly educated patron. Literary culture may be asserted in other ways too, as by the famous portrait from Hadrumetum (Sousse) of Vergil seated between two Muses and holding the scroll of the

³⁶ For all this section, see further Dunbabin, *MRNA*, *passim*; M. Fantar et al., *La mosaïque en Tunisie* (Paris/Tunis 1994); M. Blanchard-Lemée, M. Ennaifer, H. and L. Slim, *Mosaics of Roman Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia* (New York 1996).

Aeneid.³⁷ Some deities are exceptionally popular, and appear not only in episodes from their myths but in more formal and hieratic presentation. Prominent among them are Neptune, who rides over the waves in the midst of his marine associates; Venus, who is shown very frequently as the sea-born goddess, carried in her shell by Tritons and crowned by Erotes; and above all Dionysus. Dionysiac imagery is almost ubiquitous, ranging from simple groups of satyrs and maenads to the Triumph of the god in his chariot of leopards or tigers, crowned by Victory and escorted by a crowd of his followers. The enthusiasm for Dionysus has sometimes been taken to reflect actual cult, and the mosaics as identifying their buildings as the seats of Dionysiac associations, but this is probably mistaken. Allusions to the mysteries may occur in a few scenes, but most of the mosaics are unlikely to imply commitment at any profound level.³⁸ However, they often evoke the god's role as deity of fertility, a theme reinforced by the frequent presence of the personifications of the Seasons in association with him.³⁹

The second main category of subject-matter is derived from the contemporary world of Roman North Africa. The themes chosen reflect the interests and activities of the wealthy patrons who commissioned them, especially those which served to enhance their status. Hunting scenes such as that at Althiburus not only illustrated a favourite occupation, but also informed all who saw them, displayed in a house in town, that the owner possessed country estates and the horses and hounds necessary for the sport; the practice of identifying hunters or animals by name drove the message home. Many mosaics are concerned with the games of the amphitheatre. Some doubtless reflect only general enthusiasm for the games, but others are specifically designed to commemorate a show put on by the patron himself: this was one of the principal duties of the civic magistrates, through which they won the favour of the populace. This is most explicitly conveyed by a mosaic found in Smirat, not far from Thysdrus⁴⁰ (figure 118). It shows a troop of arena hunters

fighting leopards, all identified by name, under the patronage of Diana and Dionysus. They are arranged along both sides of a large rectangular panel, casting shadows on an otherwise neutral ground. Two lengthy inscriptions take up most of the centre. The first records the herald's appeal to the people in the amphitheatre to pay the hunters for their work; the second gives the acclamations of the crowd, applauding the munificence of the donor of the show, Magerius, who gives double the sum requested by the herald. Further acclamations of the name of Magerius appear elsewhere on the mosaic, one of them above what is clearly a portrait of the man himself. We are left in little doubt that this is the owner of the house, who has commissioned the mosaic as a permanent record of his generosity and its favourable reception by the people.

The chariot races of the circus, the other great form of entertainment for the populace, also provided a rich source of material. Mosaics illustrate the races in the arena, or assert the patron's support for individual charioteers with their favourite horses or for the factions who organised the races. In Carthage, a unique mosaic has given its name to the House of the Horses, which also contained a hunting scene resembling that at Althiburus.⁴¹ The mosaic of the principal room has a border which shows children dressed as amphitheatre hunters attacking various birds and inoffensive small beasts against a background of strewn branches; the theme occurs, in almost identical form, on one of the mosaics at Piazza Armerina in Sicily⁴² (plate 18; see also figure 145). Within this, the floor is divided into a chequer of alternating panels of *opus sectile* and of mosaic. Sixty-one of the latter survive; they contain the figures of charioteers, of circus attendants, and of more than fifty circus horses (figures 119, 120). Accompanying each horse is an extraordinarily heterogeneous collection of little scenes and figures, which Salomonson interpreted as indicating, in riddling and allusive fashion, the names of the horses portrayed: a challenge to the viewers to exercise their wit and skill in identifying them (though some remain enigmatic).⁴³

³⁷ L. Foucher, *Inventaire des mosaïques, feuille no. 57 de l'Atlas Archéologique: Sousse* (Tunis 1960), 49–50, no. 57.104, pl. xxv; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 131, 242, pl. 130.

³⁸ On this problem see R. Hanoune, 'Les associations dionysiaques dans l'Afrique romaine', *L'Association dionysiaque dans les sociétés anciennes* (CEFR 89, Rome 1986), 149–64, with refs.

³⁹ Parrish, *Season Mosaics* 43–5.

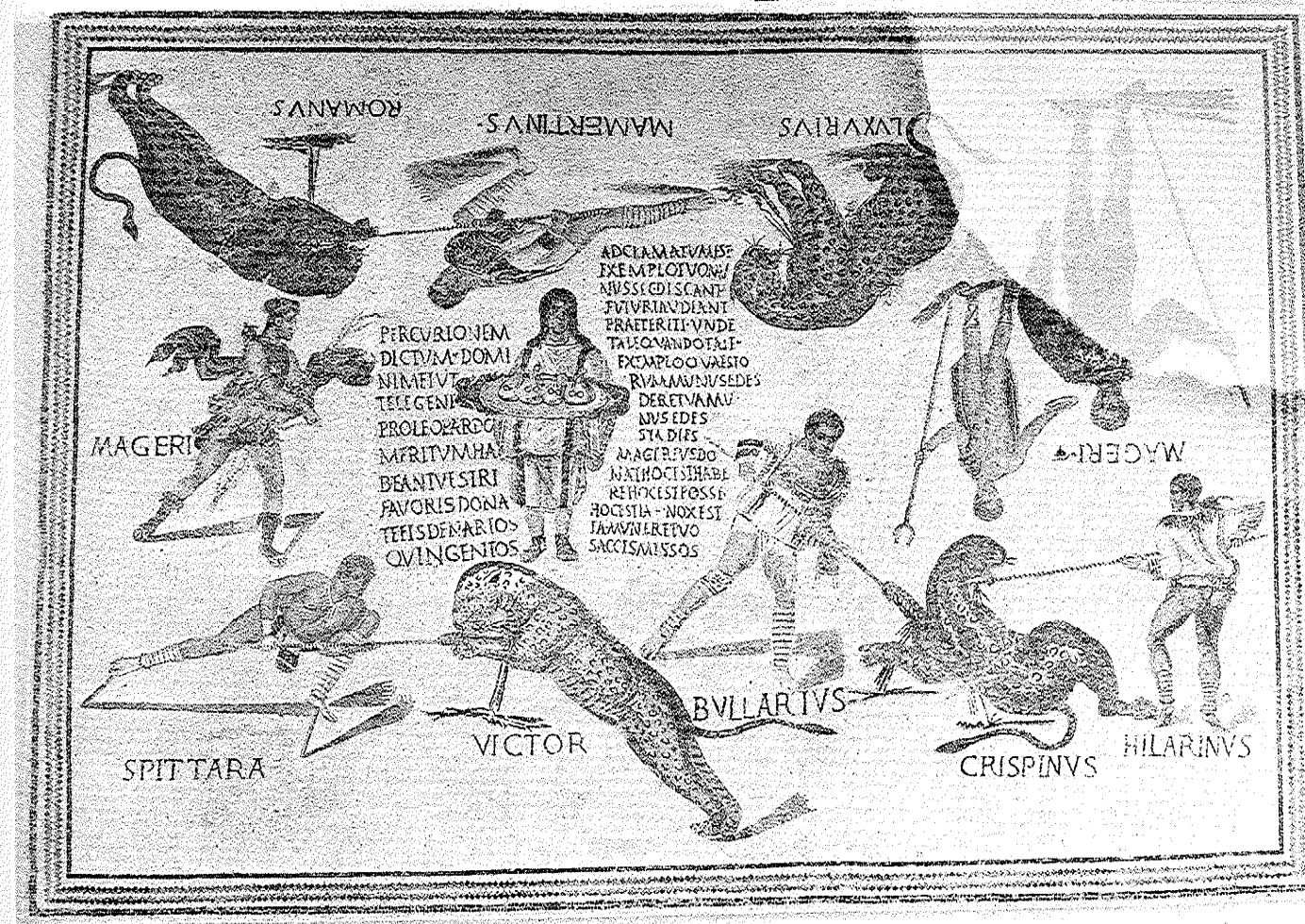
⁴⁰ A. Beschtaouch, 'La mosaïque de chasse à l'amphithéâtre découverte à Smirat en Tunisie', *CRAI* 1966, 134–57; Beschtaouch, 'A propos de la mosaïque de Smirat', *Africa Romana* 4, 1986 (1987), 677–80;

Dunbabin, *MRNA* 67–9, pls. 52–3. It probably dates to the mid-third century.

⁴¹ Salomonson, *Mosaïque aux chevaux*, 26–8 (hunting scene), 31–126 (mosaic of horses); Dunbabin, *MRNA*, 44, 53, 85–6, 95–6, pls. I, 24–5, 75–6, 84–6. Parallels indicate a date in the early fourth century.

⁴² Below, ch. 8, n. 22.

⁴³ Another mosaic belonging to the same complex of buildings contained an inscription acclaiming the supporters of the blue faction, implying a close link with the circus games: C. Nicolet, A. Beschtaouch, *CRAI* 1991, 471–507.



118 Smirat, Amphitheatre Mosaic. Sousse Museum. 4.20 m × 2.20 m. Probably mid-third century AD.

Scenes of athletics are rarer, and mostly confined to representations of wrestlers and boxers used as appropriate decoration for baths; but a recent discovery from southern Byzacena is much more interesting. It comes from a bath building at a remote site called Batten Zamour, in the Talh plain; the nearest city of any size was Capsa (Gafsa) in the interior.⁴⁴ The figured panel, 4.65 m. square, contains a variety of scenes, arranged in approximate registers against a plain white ground; the quality of execution is excellent. The athletic contests illustrated include the foot race, long jump, discus, wrestling, boxing, and pankration, mostly accompanied by umpires; unusual is the episode of a race in armour, holding torches. The prizes, crowns, palm branches, and money bags, are displayed in the centre; and a victorious athlete receives his prizes, to the sound of the trumpet. Another victor makes a tour of honour, displaying the palm and magnificent prize-crown that he has received. The whole gives a quite exceptional illustration of scenes from an

athletic festival of Greek type, similar to those current in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. It is remarkable, both for its wealth of iconographic detail, and as evidence of the degree of Hellenisation of the African upper classes who would have patronised such events, and left a record of them even in a site so far from the main cities and the coast.

Other mosaics depict life on the country estates from which the patrons derived the greater part of their wealth. A famous mosaic from Caesarea (Cherchel) in Mauretania Caesariensis depicts with great vividness agricultural labours, arranged in a series of four

⁴⁴ M. Khanoussi, 'Spectaculum pugilum et gymnasium', *CRAI* 1988, 543–61; Khanoussi, 'Les spectacles de jeux athlétiques et de pugilat dans l'Afrique romaine', *RömMitt* 98, 1991, 315–22, pl. 74; M. Ennaifer, 'Contribution à la connaissance des mosaïques de la région de l'antique Capsa', *CMGR* vi, 262–4. Internal evidence indicates a date in the early fourth century.



119 Carthage, House of the Horses, Mosaic of Horses. Carthage, Antiquarium. 12.12 m × 9.08 m. Early fourth century AD.

superimposed registers⁴⁵ (figure 121). Peasants drive ploughs drawn by teams of oxen, and scatter seed over the field among the olive trees; on the two lower registers they work in the vineyard in winter, hoeing the soil and piling it up around the roots of the leafless vines. The details of costume and equipment and the physical setting of the

⁴⁵ J. Bérard, 'Mosaïques inédites de Cherchel', *MEFR* 52, 1935, 113–42, pls. 1–111; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 114–15, pls. 102–4. There is no evidence for the date; it has been placed on stylistic grounds in the early third century, but this is probably too early. G. Ch. Picard (*La civilisation de l'Afrique romaine*² (Paris 1990), 190, 236 n. 100) upholds a date at the end of the third, which I now find more plausible.

⁴⁶ A. Merlin, 'La mosaïque du seigneur Julius à Carthage', *BAC* 1921, 95–114; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 119–21, pl. 109; Parrish, *Season mosaics*



120 Carthage, House of the Horses, Mosaic of Horses, panel of horse accompanied by fowling equipment, probably alluding to its name. 0.60 m × 0.60 m.

work are represented with unusual care, and the whole is distinguished by an extraordinary energy and vigour. It is plausible to suppose that the subject was chosen as a reminder, in a city setting, of the source of the patron's prosperity.

Much clearer allusions to status are conveyed by the Mosaic of Dominus Julius at Carthage, which may be placed with reasonable certainty in the late fourth century⁴⁶ (figure 122). It too is composed in registers, but the central and dominating feature here is a building, with (apparently) powerful walls and towers, an arcade along the façade, and baths rendered as a series of domes,

111–13, no. 9, pls. 15–16; W. Raack, 'Publica non despiciens. Ergänzungen zur Interpretation des Dominus-Julius-Mosaiks aus Karthago', *RömMitt* 94, 1987, 295–308, pls. 138–9, with further refs. The date is based on close parallels of figure-style and ornament with mosaics from Carthage dated at the end of the fourth to the beginning of the fifth century; compare the group discussed in K. Dunbabin, 'A mosaic workshop in Carthage around A.D. 400', in J. G. Pedley, ed., *New Light on Ancient Carthage* (Ann Arbor 1980), 73–83.

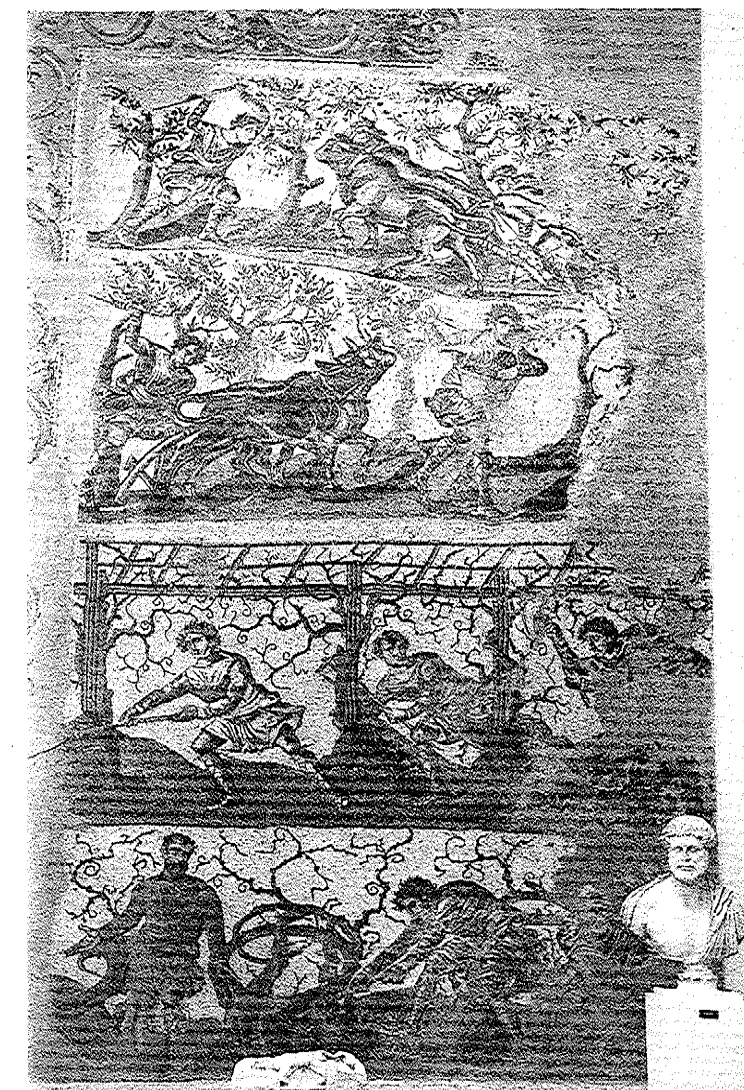
undoubtedly intended to represent a luxurious country mansion of late imperial type.⁴⁷ Around this are arranged scenes of rural activities, corresponding to the four seasons of the year. They are focused upon richly dressed figures who represent the lord and lady of the estate, to whom attendants, or the peasants themselves, bring its produce. At the top ducks, olives, and a lamb are brought to the lady seated in the centre; at the bottom the lady appears again, receiving offerings of roses and fish, while the lord, seated in the vineyard, receives grapes, a hare, and two water-birds, the latter accompanied by a scroll with his name on it. The lord is seen again in the middle register on horseback and in official dress, approaching his villa, while hunters depart from it on the other side. The whole is designed to convey unmistakably a picture of the great country estate, watched over by its master and mistress, while season after season its lavish produce pours in. Thereby it communicates the ideal self-image of the aristocratic landowner, for his own edification and that of his guests. Like the Smirat amphitheatre mosaic, it sums up in succinct and explicit form the role which these mosaics could play in the decoration of the house, and the sort of message with which they were endowed.

V

Although the cities of Tripolitania were technically for most of their history a part of the Proconsular province, the mosaics found in this region constitute a distinct group, open to other influences than those of the more central areas, and they do not necessarily evolve along identical lines. *Emblemata* are much more common in this region than elsewhere in North Africa; and there is no sign of the Floral Style characteristic of Byzacena. Two complexes in particular deserve separate discussion, both from villas on the coast near Lepcis Magna. The mosaics from the villa at Zliten have provoked extensive controversy since their discovery in 1913–14, especially as regards their chronology.⁴⁸ They have been considered by some to belong to the late first century AD, and therefore to be

⁴⁷ Cf. N. Duval, 'L'iconographie des "villas africaines" et la vie rurale dans l'Afrique romaine de l'Antiquité tardive', *Histoire et Archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, Actes du IIIe Colloque International, Montpellier 1985* (Paris 1986), 163–76, with an interpretation of the architecture different from that of the 'fortified estate' previously accepted.

⁴⁸ S. Aurigemma, *I mosaici di Zliten* (Rome–Milan 1926); Aurigemma, *Tripolitania* 55–60, pls. 116–74; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 17–18, 66, 109, pls. 1–2, 46–9, 95–6, and Appendix 1, 235–7, for a summary of the



121 Caesarea (Cherchel), Agricultural Labours. Cherchel Museum. Surviving portion 3.60 m × 5.50 m. Third century AD, perhaps late.

among the earliest mosaics of North Africa, by others to be as late as the Severan period, or even the beginning of the fourth century. More recently another villa has been discovered at Silin, whose geometric mosaics are clearly executed by the same workshop as those of Zliten, but are probably slightly later. The dating of the two therefore hangs together, at least as far as the main period of decoration goes, though individual mosaics might have been

problem of the dating. I still accept an early dating for at least the mosaic of volutes, the amphitheatre frieze, and the agricultural *emblemata*, though the first half of the second century now seems more likely than the late first. D. Parrish, 'The date of the mosaics from Zliten', *AntAfr* 21, 1985, 137–58, argues for a Severan dating for the mosaic of the Seasons and the amphitheatre scenes; his arguments especially in the latter case seem to me unconvincing, based upon stylistic parallels which are much too broad.



122 Carthage, Mosaic of Dominus Julius. Musée du Bardo, Tunis. 5.65 m × 4.50 m. Late fourth century AD.

laid at different periods. The archaeological material from the excavations at Silin is still under investigation, but has been thought likely to indicate a date in the later second century.⁴⁹

The Zliten villa contained both geometric mosaics of the 'multiple-decor' type (rare elsewhere in North Africa) and floors composed of alternating squares of mosaic (often in the form of *emblemata*) and of *opus sectile*. Among the most remarkable was one where *opus sectile* alternated with panels containing fish, the whole surrounded by a figured frieze. A simple black-and-white pattern of tangent circles surrounded this on three sides. The frieze shows scenes from the amphitheatre displayed against a plain white ground with no indication of

setting⁵⁰ (figures 123, 124). They differ from other amphitheatre scenes in North Africa in the importance given to gladiators, who are otherwise very rare. Here they occupy two sections of the frieze, in a series of episodes showing different categories of gladiator: heavy-armed *Thraces*, *mirmillones*, *hoplomachi*, and others distinguished by their characteristic equipment and fighting techniques, and the lightly armed *retiarius* with trident and dagger. Each section opens with a representation of the arena orchestra, composed of trumpeter, hornplayers, and female organist; umpires appear among the combatants, and litters wait to carry away the dead and wounded. The other two sections of the frieze represent *venationes* (the hunts of the arena), with the pursuit of various beasts

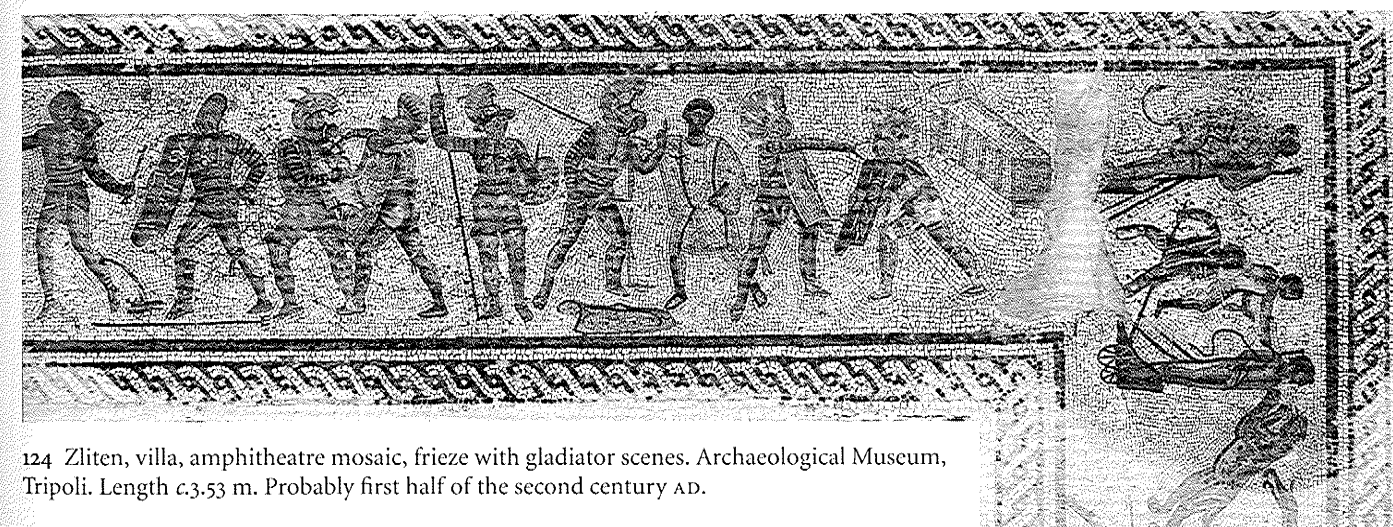
⁴⁹ O. Al Mahjub, 'I mosaici della villa romana di Silin', *CMGR* 111, 299–306, with colour plates; largely repeated, with additional illustrations in Al Mahjub, *Libya Antiqua* 15–16, 1978–79 (1987), 69–74; G.Ch. Picard, 'La villa du taureau à Silin (Tripolitaine)', *CRAI* 1985,

227–41 (see below, n.57). For the date see L. Musso, *RivStArch* ser.3, 6–7, 1983–4, 190: hardly later than the mid-second century.

⁵⁰ Aurigemma, *I mosaici* (cit.n.48), 131–201; G. Ville, 'Essai de datation de la mosaïque des gladiateurs de Zliten', *CMGR* 1, 147–55, figs.1–20.



123 Zliten, villa, amphitheatre mosaic, frieze with gladiator scenes. Archaeological Museum, Tripoli. Length c.3.53 m. Probably first half of the second century AD.



124 Zliten, villa, amphitheatre mosaic, frieze with gladiator scenes. Archaeological Museum, Tripoli. Length c.3.53 m. Probably first half of the second century AD.

such as deer and ostriches, and a dwarf fighting a boar; episodes of the last type might be introduced for light relief among more regular items. The highlight of the exhibition is provided by scenes showing the execution of dark-skinned prisoners, presumably southern barbarians, who have been condemned to be devoured by the beasts. Two are bound to stakes mounted on little carts pushed by attendants, to be mauled by a couple of leopards; another is driven by blows of a whip towards an attacking lion. All the scenes are marked by an attention to realism of detail, which extends from the careful observation of the costumes, equipment, and physical types of the participants to the blood spurting from the wounds. The technique is extremely fine, with the small tesserae characteristic of *vermiculatum*. The purpose of the mosaic is presumably to commemorate an actual event, like other African amphitheatre mosaics discussed above; but the manner of its execution, and the sense of direct observation that it conveys are unique.

The finest of the Zliten mosaics is the mosaic of the

Volutes, which is also unique of its kind⁵¹ (figure 125). It decorated a small room, a quarter-circle in shape, whose function is obscure. The centre was occupied by a circle, largely destroyed except for marine creatures in compartments formed by garlands around its edge. The space between the circle and the walls was filled with floral scrolls springing from an acanthus clump and curling freely over a white ground. The plant thus created is a product of fantasy, brilliantly coloured, and including a wide variety of different floral elements; but the individual forms are observed with the greatest delicacy and naturalism. So are the small creatures which appear in it: birds catching insects, a mother bird feeding her young in a nest formed in the calyx of a flower, a mouse confronting a snail, a chameleon. Again the naturalism is outstanding, with species of birds carefully differentiated by colour and form, and characteristic movements (for instance, a bird pecking at its claw) carefully rendered.

⁵¹ Aurigemma, *ibid.*, 205–32.



125 Zliten, villa, mosaic of Volutes. Archaeological Museum, Tripoli. Probably first half of the second century AD.

The mosaic differs from the examples of the Floral Style in Africa discussed above, none of which can compare with it in naturalism and freedom of design, and seems rather to retain something of the Hellenistic tradition of floral and animal illustration. In technique too it belongs in the category of *vermiculatum*, the tesserae comparable in size to the finest of the *emblemata* at Pompeii.⁵² Glass is not used, but an extraordinary range of tones is drawn from the available stones.

A further detail of the Volutes mosaic may give a clue to the influences operating here. In two places along the edge are visible the tips of pairs of feet, represented as if protruding from the wall: one are human feet, probably female, the other goat hooves. They can only be explained as the remains of figures, most likely a nymph and satyr, the rest of whose bodies were portrayed on the vertical

⁵² Aurigemma, *ibid.*, 247–9, counting up to fifty and sixty tesserae per cm sq in the finest portions of the figures: individual tesserae would therefore measure 1–2 mm square.

⁵³ Al Mahjub, *CMGR* III, 302 and colour plate. For the theme, cf. Parrish, *Season Mosaics*, 46–50; Musso, *RivStArch* (cit.n.49), 162–3,

wall behind. Nothing remains of the decoration of the walls, though a few fragments of debris which may have come from them bore traces of glass tesserae on their surface, and would confirm the presence of wall mosaics here. This may suggest that the decoration of the room was planned as a whole, walls and floor together, and perhaps executed by the same craftsmen; and that the Volutes mosaic is therefore to be seen as a direct continuation of a wall mosaic upon the floor, differing only in its use of more resistant material for the tesserae.

The villa at Silin also contains both 'multiple-decor' mosaics and panels of *opus sectile*. But here too the main focus of attention is on figured panels, usually fairly small though not true *emblemata*, set at the centre of an area otherwise paved with geometric designs. The workmanship in them is fine, though not quite comparable to the finest of the Zliten mosaics: tesserae in the figured scenes average 2.2–4 mm, and there is a wide range of colours, often including glass. One shows an allegorical scene with the god of eternity, Aion, holding a circle marked with the signs of the zodiac, through which pass the four Seasons, female figures carrying their fruits and accompanied by putti who signify their crops. Venus with Eros sits at one side; the sun-god drives his chariot in the sky, with (probably) the morning star flying before him⁵³ (figure 126). Other illustrations of the same theme are known, including a black-and-white mosaic from Ostia which reduces the scene to its barest minimum; it belongs in a group of subjects which play with allegories of time and the cosmos. Its origin is almost certainly a painting; and in none of the other copies are the painterly qualities conveyed so well as here, where the figures are set in a rocky landscape, the chariot of the sun breaks through the clouds at the top, and the figures are modelled with the finest of naturalistic nuances.

Another figured panel, larger than normal, contains a representation of the chariot races of the circus.⁵⁴ The main monuments of the circus building are shown: the starting-gates, the *metae* or turning-posts, and the central *spina*, a long raised basin on whose sides are set a variety of monuments including the dolphins and eggs which were raised and lowered to mark the laps. Around this are racing the chariots, shown in several successive stages of

who suggests that the seated female may be a personification of the fruitfulness of the earth, rather than Venus. See also the cosmological mosaic from Emerita (Mérida), below ch.9, n.15.

⁵⁴ Al Mahjub, *CMGR* III, 302, fig.7 and colour plates.



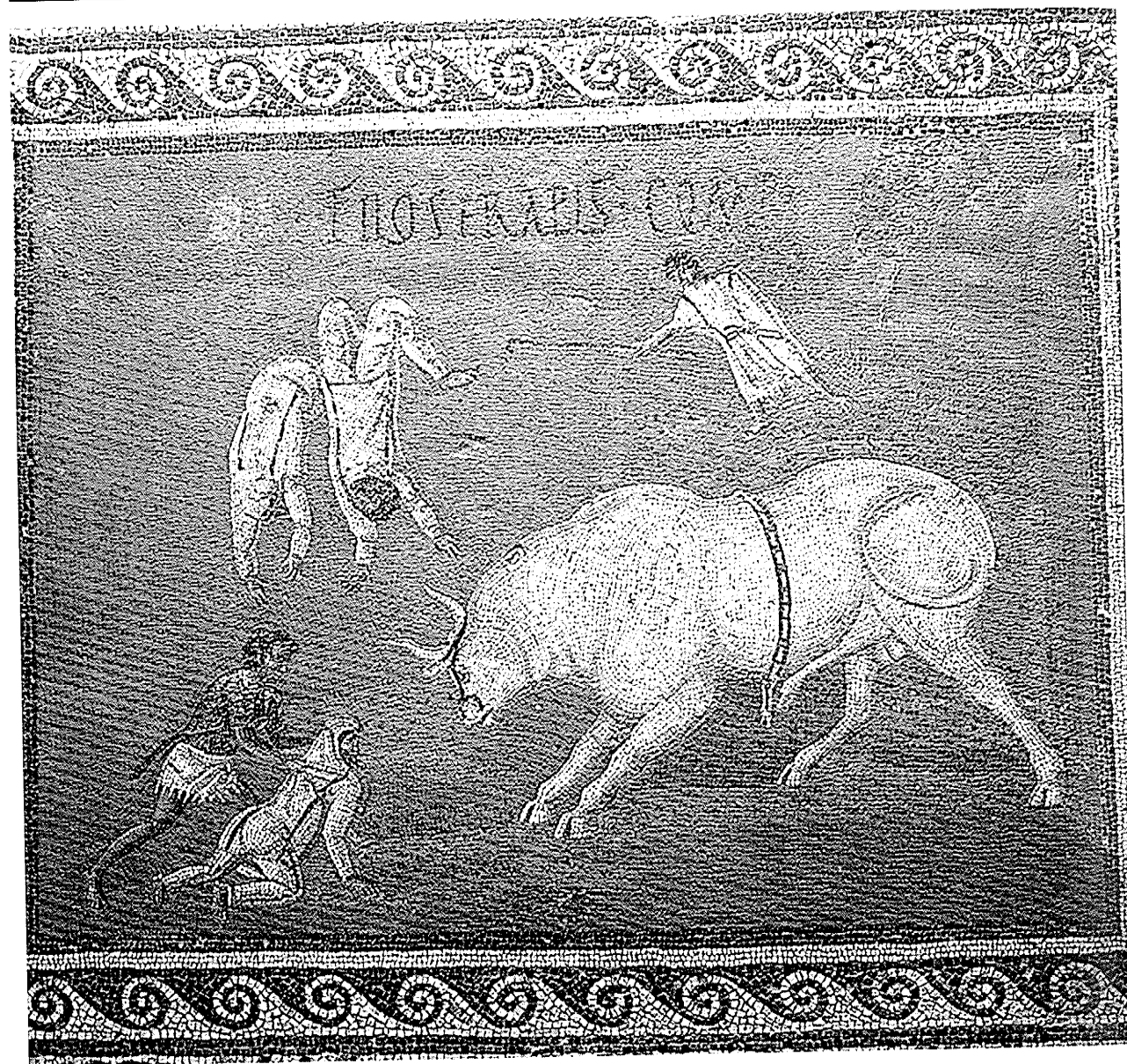
126 Silin, villa, mosaic of Aion and the Seasons. 1.60 m square. Probably mid- to second half of the second century AD.

the race from start to finish, and accompanied by various attendants and hangers-on. Several different viewpoints are adopted for the monuments and the chariots; the starting-gates, for instance, are set across one end of the pavement, at right angles to the *spina* in the centre. The panel belongs in a series of mosaics which show the races of the circus along with its main monuments, many of which come from North Africa or from areas influenced by the African mosaics. But the details of the monuments themselves are almost certainly derived ultimately from the Circus Maximus at Rome; and the Silin mosaic offers one of the clearest renderings, comparable only to that at Piazza Armerina in Sicily.⁵⁵

The most remarkable of the Silin mosaics for its subject-matter is a small panel which shows two victims dressed in a conspicuous costume of tunic and trousers, being tossed by a huge white bull, while a third, similar victim is pushed towards the bull by a man clad in an animal skin and white fringed kilt; another figure more normally dressed in a long white tunic gestures with a hooked staff towards the two victims in the air⁵⁶ (figure

⁵⁵ Below, ch.8, n.11; cf. J. Humphrey, *AJA* 88, 1984, 392–5, and for the other examples, Humphrey, *Roman Circuses. Arenas for Chariot Racing* (London 1986), 138–51, 208–46.

⁵⁶ Al Mahjub, *CMGR* III, 303, figs.5, 8, and colour plate; cf. J.M. Blázquez Martínez et al., 'Pavimentos africanos con espectáculos de toros', *AntAfr* 26, 1990, 155–61.



127 Silin, villa, scene with bull tossing victims. 1.13 m × 0.84 m. Probably mid- to second half of the second century AD.

127). This is presumably another scene of the executions of the amphitheatre, like that at Zliten; the carefully differentiated costumes either identify the victims as a specific group or allude to some custom or ritual involved in the execution. A passage in the Acts of the Martyrdom of Saint Perpetua (18.4) records the attempt to make the Christian victims (martyred at Carthage in AD 203) wear a

⁵⁷ *Filoserapis comp(osit)*, probably referring to the organiser of the *munus*: cf. Picard, 'La villa' (cit.n.49). He thinks the costume identifies the victims as easterners, and suggests they may be prisoners captured during Caracalla's eastern campaigns in 216; from this, and the use elsewhere of the name *Filoserapis* as an epithet of Caracalla, he derives a dating to the latter's reign, which seems too speculative.

special costume before entering the arena, the men that of priests of Saturn; something similar may be intended here. At the top is an inscription, *Filoserapis comp*, perhaps identifying the organiser of the display.⁵⁷

VI

The mosaics of the more western provinces of Africa also exhibit local characteristics, distinct from those of the mainstream. Little has survived here from the earlier period, though some mosaics at Caesarea (Cherchel) appear to reflect the direct influence of the second-century workshops of Proconsularis, with similar floral

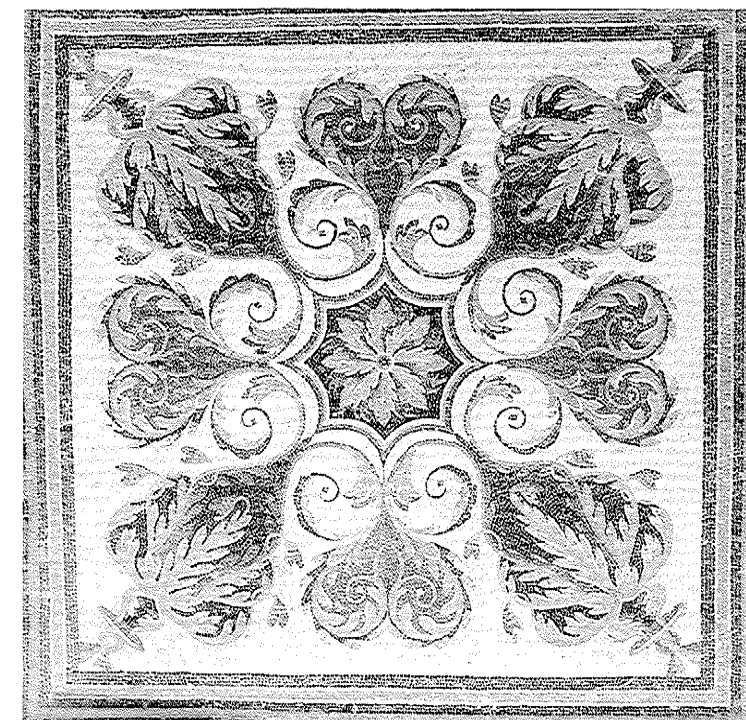
and ornamental designs. More individual works began to appear from (probably) the end of the second century, and workshops with their own distinct characteristics were established in several centres. Among the most productive were Caesarea (Cherchel), among whose masterpieces is the mosaic of Agricultural Labours discussed above;⁵⁸ and Cuicul (Djemila), known especially for a series of works running at least into the fifth century.⁵⁹ Although much of the repertory, both ornamental and figured, is related to that of Carthage and the other more eastern centres, some of the figured scenes are marked by an unusual vigour and expressiveness; while the ornamental motifs show a development towards a style based upon juxtaposition and contrasts of colour, with frequent use of dark backgrounds, rather than upon pure design.⁶⁰

The most remarkable of the Numidian workshops is that of Thamugadi (Timgad), a colony founded in AD 100 as a centre for veterans from the nearby legionary headquarters. Much of the production here consists of run-of-the-mill geometric pavements; and the few figured scenes are small and undistinguished. But a group of about forty mosaics introduce floral motifs of a startling richness and originality.⁶¹ Their characteristic method is to take a geometric framework and 'vegetalise' it, following the main lines of the design with leaves or scrolls, filling the spaces with rosettes, petals, and arabesques of tendrils (figure 128). It is the same procedure as that of the Floral Style of the Byzacene workshops, and the basic designs similarly go back to Italian originals used in black-and-white mosaics of the Hadrianic period. But whereas the Byzacene mosaics were marked at first by a sparse elegance, followed by an increasingly monotonous accumulation of ornament, the Thamugadi mosaicists produced patterns of great luxuriance which show extraordinary inventiveness. Designs based on a few simple shapes, such as hearts, cups, and spindles, are enriched with vegetal elements and repeated with inexhaustible variety. It is above all the use of colour which distinguishes them. Rather than trace the motifs on a uniform white back-

⁵⁸ Above, n.45; cf. Ph. Leveau, 'Les Maisons nobles de Caesarea de Maurétanie', *AntAfr* 18, 1982, 109–65, with refs.

⁵⁹ Blanchard-Lemée, *Djemila*, esp. 227–37; Blanchard-Lemée, 'Nouvelles recherches sur les mosaïques de Djemila', *CMGR* 111, 277–86; Blanchard-Lemée, 'La "Maison de Bacchus" à Djemila', *BAC* n.s.17 B, 1981 (1984), 131–43, with discussion of the possibility of dating some of the mosaics to the sixth century.

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Blanchard, 'Numidie et Maurétanie Césarienne: les grandes mosaïques de l'Algérie ancienne', *Dossiers de l'Archéologie* 31, 1978, 93–102.



128 Thamugadi, House west of baths of Philadelphi, Floral mosaic. Timgad Museum. 2.20 m × 2.20 m. Late second to early third century AD.

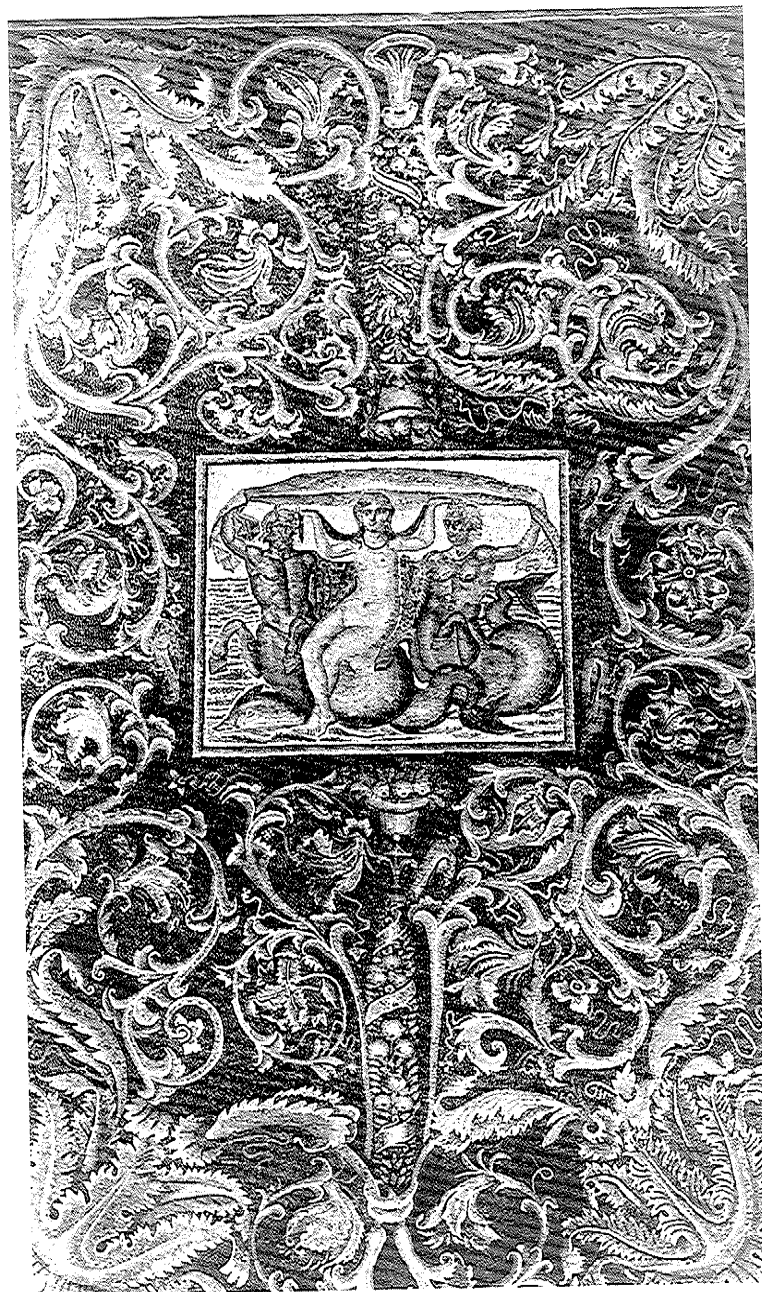
ground, they vary the ground colour from one part of the design to another, so that the floral elements, themselves coloured in shades of green, ochre, and red, stand out against contrasting areas of red, black, or white. Thus one of the most lavish traces a design based upon squares and octagons, all clad in leaves, between which are great acanthus rosettes derived from four heart-shapes; the ground of the motifs is alternately white, black, and rose⁶² (plate 19). The result is a chromatic richness which has almost inevitably given rise to comparisons with carpets, though it should be stressed that no textiles known from antiquity bear any resemblance to these mosaics.

Others use a uniform black background, with even more dramatic effect. The masterpiece here is a mosaic which served as frame for a small and rather commonplace figured panel with the Triumph of marine Venus⁶³ (figure 129; plate 20). Around this, covering the greater part of the room, is an exuberant design of acanthus

⁶¹ Germain, *Timgad*, esp.148–57; Germain, 'Mosaïque italienne et mosaïque africaine: filiation et opposition', *AntAfr* 5, 1971, 155–9; Germain, 'Remarques sur des mosaïques de style fleuri de Timgad et d'Hippone', *AntAfr* 7, 1973, 259–74; J. Lassus, 'Le rinceau d'acanthus dans les mosaïques de Timgad', *Hommages à Albert Grenier* 2 (Coll.Latomus 58, 1960), 948–60, pls.CXCII–CXCVI.

⁶² Germain, *Timgad* 43–4, no.44 (House of Piscina), pls.xvii–iii, lxxx, lxxxiii, lxxxviii.

⁶³ Germain, *Timgad* 48–50, no.56 (Ilot 81), pls.xx, lxxx, lxxxii.



129 Thamugadi, Ilot 81, mosaic of acanthus scrolls, central panel with marine Venus. Timgad Museum. 2.85 m × 4.88 m. Probably third century AD.

scrolls springing from clumps in the corners and spreading without any attempt at symmetry over the black ground; others spring from garlands of fruits on the main axis. The plant forms, predominantly in reds and greens, are rendered three-dimensionally, and are capricious in nature, using real forms only as a starting point for

fantasy. A comparison between this and the Zliten mosaic of the Volutes, which also used acanthus scrolls as the basis for a creation of fantasy, shows how the same elements could be used to achieve utterly different aesthetic aims.

The workshop in Thamugadi which produced these mosaics was probably of fairly limited duration; mosaics of this type are to be found in only a small number of buildings there, mostly rich houses. Its operation cannot be dated precisely in the absence of archaeological evidence, but it seems likely that it belongs to the end of the second and the early third century. A few comparable mosaics have been found at other sites in Numidia or western Proconsularis; but not enough to establish the existence of a regional style. Rather, the Thamugadi floral mosaics illustrate the degree of originality that could be developed by artisans in a remote and comparatively insignificant town, working with material which belonged to the common stock-in-trade of the central Mediterranean, but imbuing it with an entirely new life.

Mosaics are found also in the far west of Mauretania Tingitana (modern Morocco), at towns such as Lixus, Banasa, and Volubilis. The region had closer economic links with the Iberian peninsula than with the rest of North Africa, and though no detailed study of the mosaics has yet been published, it seems that they have more in common with those of southern Spain.⁶⁴ The houses of Volubilis in particular are extensively decorated with mosaic; but though they share some motifs, both figured and ornamental, with the more central African provinces, there is little sign of any of the more original features which characterise the latter. Figures are either distributed in compartments or confined to small panels; subject-matter is mostly mythological, with occasional allusions to the circus or amphitheatre games; figure-style is generally rather crude and provincial; there are few floral designs. They reflect the typical production of a small but prosperous town under the High Empire; the richer house-owners demanded mosaics as the normal means of paving the grander and more public sections of the house, the mosaicists had an extensive repertory of geometric designs, polychrome and black-and-white, which they adapted freely to suit the space to be decorated, and a much more limited stock of figured scenes and motifs.⁶⁵ This is the background against which the

(Maroc), *CMGR* 1, 193–218; R. Thouvenot, 'La mosaïque du "Navigium Veneris" à Volubilis (Maroc)', *RA* 1977, 1, 37–52. Thouvenot ascribes the mosaics to a period running from the first century to the first half of the third; but the chronology of the

more outstanding works should always be seen. The vast majority were the work of artisans, established in innumerable small towns, and representing the widespread adoption of Roman habits, Roman fashions of life and methods of construction and decoration. They use a common stock of decorative designs and figure scenes drawn from Graeco-Roman mythology or from the popular themes of the time, slightly varied or reinterpreted to suit local demands or according to the traditions of the craftsmen; very seldom do they reflect the geographic and ethnic diversity which made up the Roman Empire.

VII

The end of the African mosaic workshops came at different dates in different places, reflecting various economic, social and cultural factors. The invasion of the barbarian Vandals in 429, followed by the establishment of a Vandal kingdom based at Carthage, broke the unity of the African provinces and separated them from the main body of the empire; the Byzantine reconquest by Justinian's armies in the mid-sixth century restored a reduced area to the eastern empire of Constantinople. While many centres may have already been in decline by the fifth century, an increasing body of evidence indicates that in some cities, especially Carthage, production did not come to an end with the Vandal invasion, but continued through the period of Vandal domination into that following the Byzantine reconquest. Mosaics continued to be produced through the sixth century and as late as the seventh, in secular as well as ecclesiastical contexts. More controversial is the question how long this vitality lasted, and what were the effects of the Arab conquest of the mid-seventh century.⁶⁶

Moroccan mosaics is even more problematic than that of other regions of North Africa. For an examination of the chronology of the houses at Volubilis see A. Akerraz, 'Nouvelles observations sur l'urbanisme du quartier nord-est de Volubilis', *Africa romana* 4, 1986 (1987), 2, 445–60.

⁶⁴ Cf. K. Dunbabin, 'Mosaics of the Byzantine period in Carthage', *CahEtAnc* 17, *Carthage* 7 (Quebec 1985), 9–26; M. Ennaifer, 'La mosaïque africaine à la fin de l'antiquité et au début de l'époque médiévale', *CMGR* v, 307–19. A fragmentary mosaic that may have a *terminus post quem* as late as 649–59 (a coin of the Emperor Constans II) has been found in the excavations of the Christian basilica at Bir el Knissia at Carthage: see M. Alexander, in S. Stevens, *Bir el Knissia at Carthage: A Rediscovered Cemetery Church* (JRA suppl. 7, Ann Arbor 1993), 138–40.

On many of these later mosaics styles and trends already apparent in previous centuries continue to be seen. A rich house at Clupea (Kélibia) contained two hunting scenes provisionally ascribed to the fifth and sixth century respectively.⁶⁷ Both are composed in what was by now the traditional way, with episodes of the hunt distributed over registers, and named hunters. The earlier mosaic shows familiar episodes of hare and boar hunting, and also a scene of falconing, a fowler with limed twigs for birds, and an unusual scene of partridges driven towards a net. The later one was apparently modelled to some extent on the earlier, from which it repeats some episodes, including that of the partridge-drive. Its central focus is a scene of a hunter saluting a statue of Diana in a shrine, which in turn recalls a scene on a mosaic from Carthage (known as the 'Offering of the Crane'), from the early fifth century.⁶⁸ It is clear that the traditional motifs and methods of composition of the African hunting scenes were still flourishing when these mosaics were produced. Stylistically they are marked by a greater schematisation and by an increasing use of elements which depend for their effect upon colour rather than design.

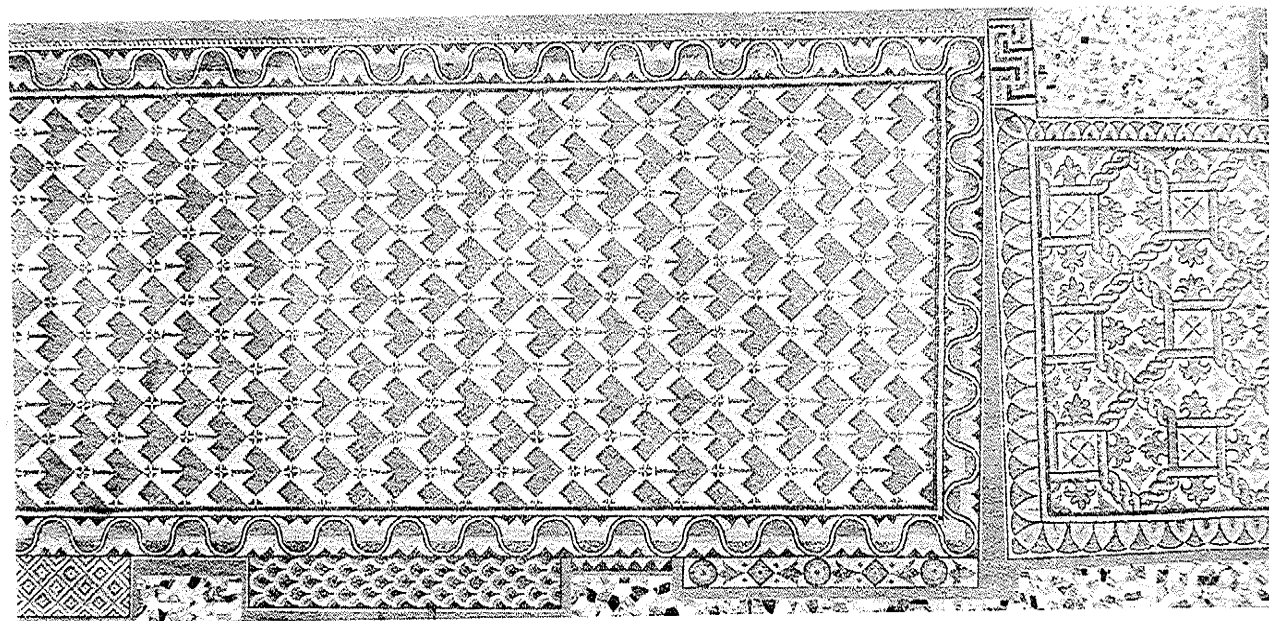
On other mosaics that are probably to be ascribed to the Byzantine period the figured scenes show a tendency to disintegration. The figures lose the sense of organic structure, and it often appears that craftsmen with no training in figure design are reproducing motifs that they no longer understand. The traditional mythological repertory still persists, as seen on a mosaic from Ouled Haffouz, west of Sfax, with a scene of Leda and the Swan, accompanied by Venus and Cupid.⁶⁹ The figures, who float against a white ground, are linear, boneless, and almost entirely two-dimensional, with large staring eyes; examples of an art which has abandoned all sense of the classical canon.

One group of mosaics securely dated to the Byzantine

⁶⁷ House of Bir Ennahal or House of the two Hunts: M. Ennaifer, 'Nouvelles chasses de Tunisie', *BAC* n.s., *Afrique du Nord* 22, 1987–9 (1992), 212–15, fig. 3; Ennaifer, 'Etat de la recherche dans le domaine de la mosaïque en Tunisie', *CMGR* iv, 238–9, pl. CLIX. A more detailed report on the mosaics from this house was presented by M. Ennaifer to the VII International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics in Tunis in 1994, and a full study of the house is in preparation.

⁶⁸ *InvTun* 607; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 57–8, pls. 35–7. For the date, cf. Dunbabin in Pedley, *New Light* (cit. n. 46), 73–4.

⁶⁹ N. Jeddi, 'Une mosaïque inédite d'Ouled Haffouz (Tunisie)', *CMGR* iv, 273–9, pls. CLXXIX–CLXXXII. There is no evidence for the date, though a mosaic found beneath it can hardly be earlier than the fourth century. For other figured mosaics possibly to be assigned to the sixth or seventh century, cf. Ennaifer, *CMGR* v, 309–15.



130 Sabratha, Basilica of Justinian, aisle, with designs of pine-trees and palmettes. Mid-sixth century AD.



131 Sabratha, Basilica of Justinian, nave, with design of vine scrolls. Mid-sixth century AD.

⁷⁰ Dunbabin, 'Mosaics' (cit.n.66), with refs. Sabratha: Aurigemma, *Tripolitania*, 27–9, pls.19–42.

⁷¹ Dunbabin, *ibid.*

period shows a new ornamental style. These decorate the churches constructed after the Byzantine reconquest; the best preserved is that of the Justinianic basilica at Sabratha in Tripolitania, but others have been found in Carthage and many other sites.⁷⁰ At Sabratha the aisles and the panels next to the altar are decorated with repetitive patterns, some of them new to the repertory, such as two variants of a pattern of confronted palmettes and lotus flowers, or rows of stylised pine trees: the latter look like a design derived from woven textiles (figure 130). The effect depends upon the two-dimensional, space-covering nature of the design, rather than upon its individual elements. The main nave is occupied by a vine scroll, also transformed into a repetitive, symmetrical pattern; the vine leaves and other vegetal elements are purely two-dimensional, with heavy linear contours (figure 131). Birds, designed for decorative effect rather than naturalism, appear at frequent intervals among the scrolls; outstanding among them is the great peacock with spread tail that appears in front of the altar. Glass is lavishly used in the birds, but otherwise the palette is restricted in both vegetal and abstract forms, with ceramic tesserae used to provide red, and a narrow range of greens, ochres, and greys. It seems likely that the supply of available materials had decreased since the fourth century.

Parallels for many of the elements of these Byzantine pavements are found in sixth-century floor mosaics in North Italy, many of them also from churches constructed after the Byzantine reconquest.⁷¹ The relationship between Italian mosaics and African at this period,

and the sources of the new style, are complex; many elements of the traditional African repertory continued to be used even in the same churches. Wherever the designs originated, these mosaics testify to the continued resilience of the African mosaicists in the mid-sixth century and probably even later, and to their ability to innovate and to absorb the new.

Bibliography

Two superbly illustrated recent works are M. Fantar *et al.*, *La mosaïque en Tunisie* (Paris/Tunis 1994); M. Blanchard-Lemée, M. Ennaifer, H. and L. Slim, *Mosaics of Roman Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia* (New York 1996). See also Dunbabin, *MRNA*; and the volumes cited in n.2 above.

Sicily under the Empire: Piazza Armerina

I

The island of Sicily played a prominent role in the development of mosaics in the Hellenistic period. It was seen in earlier chapters that, although its claim to be the birthplace of tessellated mosaic cannot be substantiated, it contributed to the evolution of a variety of pavement types, and was an important source for the transmission of the Hellenistic style of mosaic to mainland Italy.¹ Under the Empire, however, conditions were very different, and Sicily became almost exclusively a recipient of fashions from outside. For the first two centuries AD the influence of the Italian mainland was dominant. Black-and-white mosaics, mostly geometric, are found especially in the north-east of the island, the region closest to Italy, at Catania, Tauromenium (Taormina), Tyndaris (Tindari), and the villa at Castoreale Bagni. They differ very little from Italian work of the later first and second centuries; it is clear that the black-and-white style was brought to the island by craftsmen from the mainland.² There is little sign of regional characteristics developing, though a group of mosaics in the baths at Tyndaris (Tindari) shows more individuality than most. Big *crustae* of marble are here placed irregularly in a setting of black and white tesserae, framing black-and-white figured panels (figure 132). These include a *triskeles*, the three-legged symbol of Sicily, the caps of the Dioscuri, patrons of Tyndaris, and a pair of athletes, whose names are given in Latin. The work is signed in Greek by Neikias, slave of Dionysios. The topical subject-matter and the use of both languages indicate the presence of a local Sicilian workshop, and the mixture of techniques also appears to be a local feature. But the style is naive and provincial, especially in the more ambitious figured subjects, and the execution is often poor.³

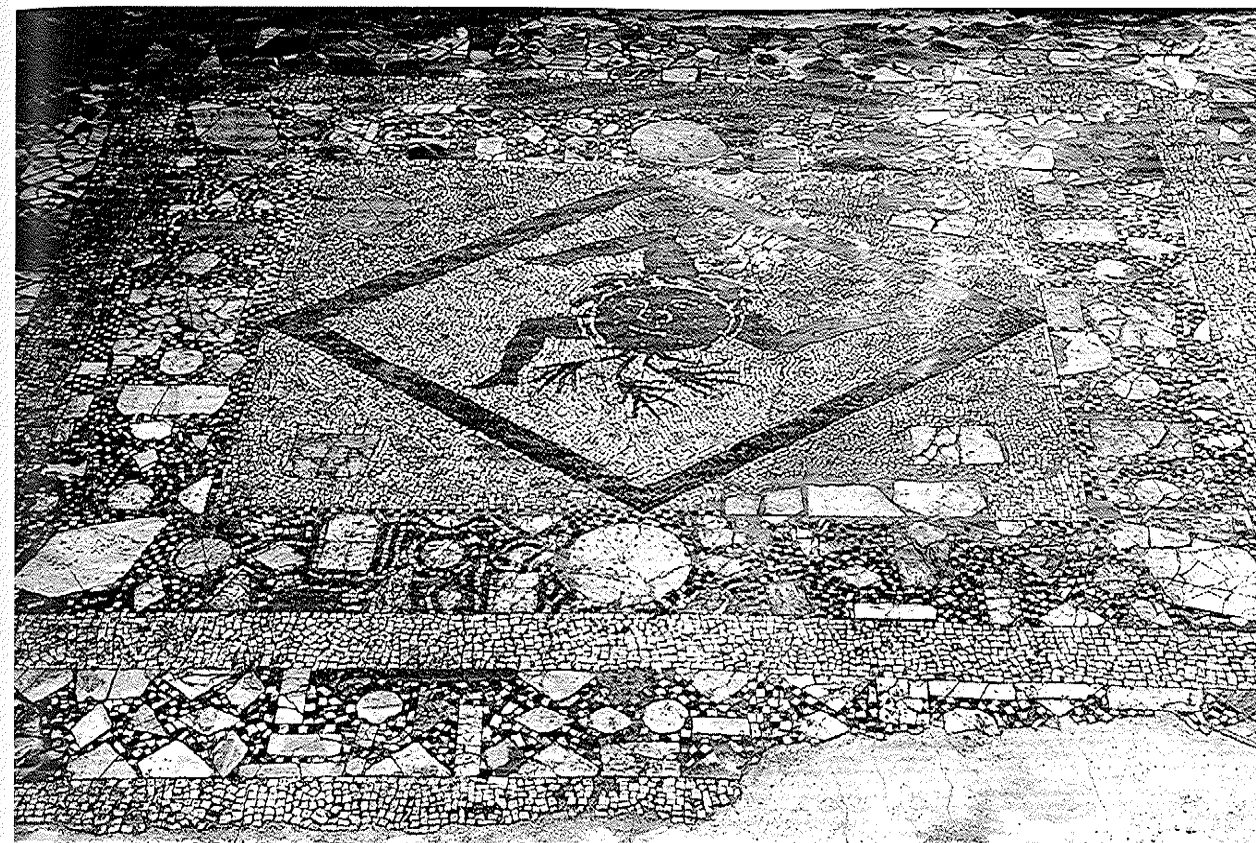
¹ Above, chs. 2, ns. 11–15; 3, ns. 1–2; Boesliger 15–80.

² Cf. Boesliger 83–127, 193–4; R.J.A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire* (Warminster 1990), 246–7.

³ Boesliger 114–27, figs. 70–80; L. Bernabò Brea, M. Cavalier, *BdA* 50, 1965, 205–9, figs. 33–6; for the signature, see below, ch. 16, n. 32. The date is probably the late second or early third century AD.

Black-and-white pavements of Italian derivation continued to be made in Sicily in the third and occasionally even the fourth centuries. However in the late second and early third century a new influence appeared: that of North Africa, whose workshops were now at their height. Polychrome mosaics, geometric, floral and figured, appear around this time, several of them almost identical in design and detail to African work especially in Carthage and the Byzacene centres. How close these parallels are may be seen on a mosaic from Lilybaeum (Marsala), showing busts of the Seasons, set in a complicated pattern of vine-trellis (figure 133). The vine-trellis design belongs in the repertory of the African Floral Style, and is found in almost identical form on mosaics at Thugga and Carthage, the latter with busts of the Muses instead of the Seasons (figure 103). It is not found elsewhere outside the Carthage area, and may safely be taken as an invention of an African, almost certainly a Carthaginian, workshop.⁴ Mosaics in Syracuse and Agrigentum (Agrigento) show equally close resemblance to specifically African designs; others make use of motifs or compositions from the African repertory, but do not correspond so exactly to African examples. Wilson has discussed the nature of the relationship between the African and Sicilian mosaics, and concludes that the closest parallels, like the Lilybaeum floor, must indicate the presence of African craftsmen operating in Sicily; it is noteworthy that they occur in cities of the south and west of the island, for which Carthage was more easily accessible than Rome. These craftsmen presumably founded local workshops, or trained Sicilian apprentices who continued to make use of African patterns and motifs but modified them in the course of time. It is clear that contacts between mosaicists in Sicily and in North Africa remained close through the third and fourth centuries,

⁴ F. Canciani, 'Un mosaico a Marsala con i busti delle stagioni', *CronCatania* 10, 1971, 121–30, pls. xli–xliii; R.J.A. Wilson, 'Roman mosaics in Sicily: the African connection', *AJA* 86, 1982, 417, pl. 51, figs. 5–7; Boesliger 146–9, figs. 95–100. Probably second half of the second century. For the African parallels, see above, ch. 7, n. 14.



132 Tyndaris, Baths, *crustae*-pavement, framing black-and-white mosaic panel with *triskeles*. 2.90 m × 2.50 m. Probably late second to early third century AD.

and elements of African design were taken up extensively on the island.⁵

II

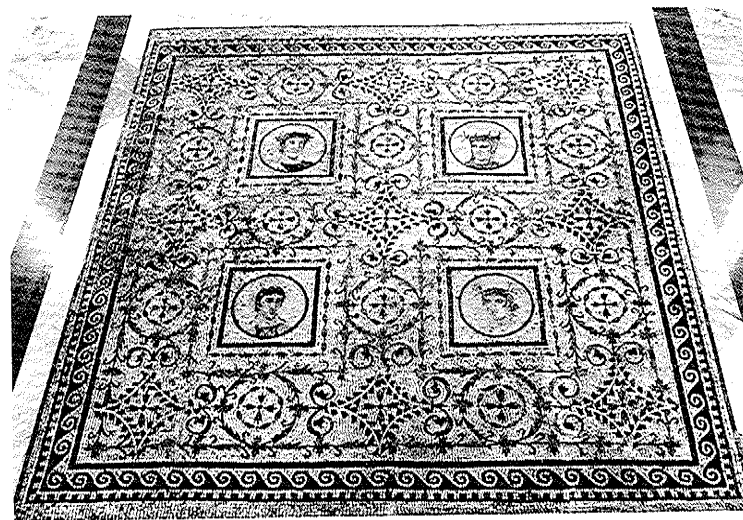
Nothing produced in third-century Sicily fully prepares for the great florescence of mosaics in the fourth. These are not distributed evenly through the island, but mostly concentrated in a few great villas, above all in the villa at Piazza Armerina in the centre of the island (figure 134). The largest complex of mosaics known within a single building from antiquity is preserved here: the whole villa except for a few service areas is paved, forming a total of

over forty separate mosaics, and covering an area of c.3,500 square metres. More prestigious *opus sectile* paves the grandest room (58), a great apsed hall or Basilica on the far side of the peristyle. All the mosaics are polychrome; geometric designs decorate minor rooms; several have vegetal designs, usually including animal figures. An extraordinarily high proportion of the rooms contain figure scenes, much higher than in a normal wealthy villa. There are traces too of lavish frescoes and marble revetment on the walls, whose contribution to the original sumptuousness and to the significance of the decoration should not be underestimated.⁶

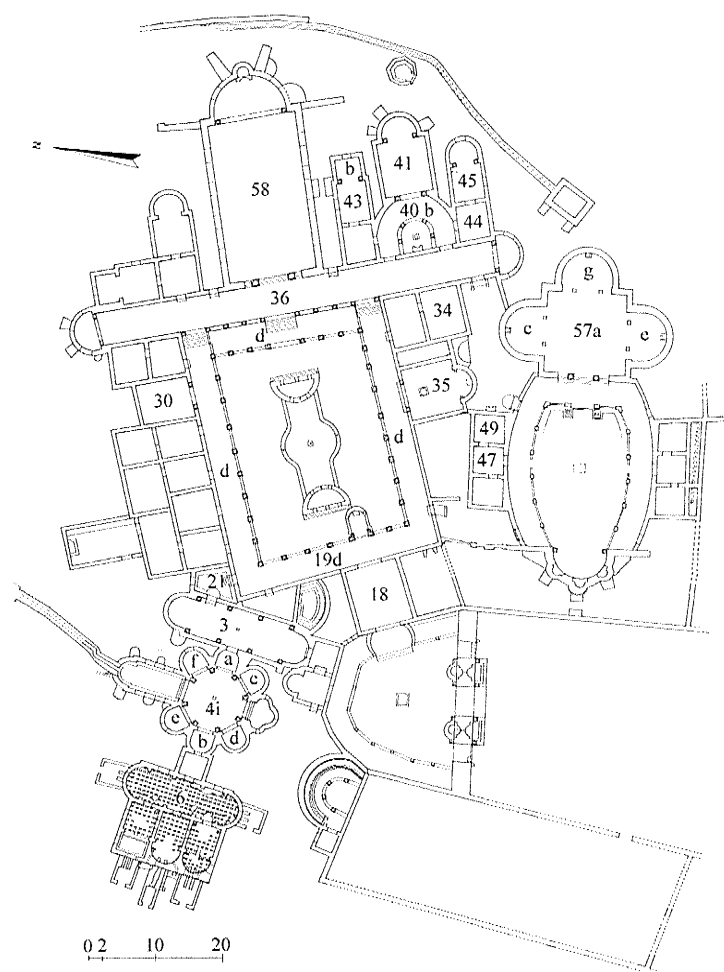
Since the discovery of the villa and its mosaics, and their rapid excavation in the 1950s, they have been the subject of

⁵ Wilson, *AJA* 86, 1982, 413–28; for his suggestion that export of prefabricated mosaics may also have been practised, see below, ch. 17, section iv. Boesliger 194–5 is more reluctant to admit the presence of African craftsmen in Sicily (as opposed to local craftsmen using African models), but her arguments do not seem conclusive for the most closely connected mosaics. The attempt by R. Camerata-Scovazzo, 'I mosaici pavimentali di Carini. Tradizione pittorica ellenistico-romana su alcuni tessellati siciliani del IV secolo', *ArchCl* 29, 1977, 134–60, to argue for influence in the reverse direction, from Sicily to Africa, is rightly dismissed by Wilson, *ibid.*, 413–16.

⁶ Full publication: *Filosofiana*, also simultaneous Italian edition. For a short but sensible survey, see Wilson, *Piazza Armerina*, with full earlier bibliography. The room numbers in the text are those given in *Filosofiana*, to which the reader is referred for a full description and illustration of each pavement. Two collections of papers on the villa appeared following the publication of *Filosofiana*: *Opus* 2.2, 1983, 537–602, and G. Rizza ed., *La Villa romana del Casale di Piazza Armerina* (Catania 1988, = *CronCatania* 23, 1984). For other recent bibliography, see Wilson, *Sicily* (cit. n. 2), 388, n. 70.



133 Lilybaeum, Floral Style mosaic with busts of the Seasons. Museo Archeologico Regionale di Palermo (N.1.2286). 3.29 m × 3.41 m. Probably second half of the second century AD.



134 Piazza Armerina, villa, plan. Probably first third of the fourth century AD.

fierce scholarly controversy; but for many years the essential basis for discussion, a full publication, was lacking. Only in 1982, with the appearance of *Filosofiana*, was a complete and thoroughly illustrated publication of structures, mosaics, and the remains of wall paintings available. The archaeological context is lost beyond recall, as a result of the unscientific character of the original excavations. Limited excavations in 1970 produced datable material which appears to indicate a main construction period for the villa in the 320s, though dates slightly later in the fourth century have also been proposed.⁷ Many of the more extreme theories propounded earlier have now been generally discarded: notably those of imperial ownership, strongly espoused by many scholars writing between the 1950s and 1970s, with attribution first to the emperor Maximian (286–305), then to his son Maxentius (306–12); and those which assigned the villa to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century, with various possible candidates for ownership.⁸ The prevailing consensus now sees the villa as the country seat (or one of the numerous country seats) of a great family of Roman aristocrats, holders of the traditional magistracies in the city of Rome, as well as of provincial governorships: a group whose phenomenal wealth and luxury completely overshadowed that of the ordinary provincial and municipal upper classes. Further attempts have been made to suggest names of various appropriate families or individuals, such as L. Aradius Valerius Proculus Populonium, member of a distinguished pagan family, who held a series of high offices

⁷ C. Ampolo, A. Carandini, G. Pucci, 'La villa del Casale a Piazza Armerina. Problemi, saggi stratigrafici, ed altre ricerche', *MEFRA* 83, 1971, 141–281, with a date of 300–20 for the construction of the villa, 310–20 or slightly later for the mosaics. This is downdated to 320–30 by Carandini in *Filosofiana* 54–8, on the basis of redating of some of the pottery, and with a provision that 'further adjustments to the pottery chronology could mean a change in the dating of the construction levels of the villa'. For proposals of a slightly later date, see the works cited below, n.9. Excavations outside the ovoid peristyle have revealed coins of Constantius II, the latest of 355/6, which might indicate a later *terminus* for the construction of this section of the villa, but fuller details and study are still awaited: E. De Miro, in Rizza, *ibid.*, 67, 73, 139.

⁸ The arguments for imperial ownership were expounded most recently by S. Settis, 'Per l'interpretazione di Piazza Armerina', *MEFRA* 87, 1975, 873–994; Settis, 'Neue Forschungen und Untersuchungen zur villa von Piazza Armerina', in D. Papenfuss, V.M. Strocka eds., *Palast und Hütte* (Mainz am Rhein 1982), 515–34. For arguments against imperial ownership, and for other earlier theories, see survey and bibliography in Dunbabin, *MRNA* 196–212, 243–5; Wilson, *Piazza Armerina* 86–99; S. Calderone, 'Contesto storico, committenza e cronologia', in Rizza, *ibid.*, 31–57.

in the first half of the fourth century, or one of the equally distinguished family of the Ceionii. But these remain pure hypotheses, and nothing justifies the assumption that all suitable members of the class in question are known to us from the historical record. More rewarding is the attempt to establish the social ambience to which the proprietors belonged, without trying to give them a name.⁹

The figured mosaics fall thematically into several overlapping groups. Most prominent are those which illustrate or allude to games and entertainment. Among these are the Great Hunt (36), with scenes of the capture of beasts for the amphitheatre *venationes*, which covers the corridor running the whole width of the villa in front of the apsidal hall (figure 135); the Circus Races (3), from the anteroom of the baths, itself shaped like a circus arena (figure 136); and the fragmentary scene of a torch-race (6), from the warm room of the baths; also the one mosaic which is certainly a later addition, since a simpler geometric floor lay beneath it, the so-called 'Bikini girls' (34b), which shows women athletes performing.¹⁰ The subject-matter of the Great Hunt and the Circus Races is familiar from the African mosaics; but both scenes at Piazza Armerina are executed on a scale and with a scope not found elsewhere. The Circus mosaic represents chariots racing in the Circus Maximus at Rome, with an unparalleled wealth of detail of the buildings and ornaments of the *spina* and the starting gates (*carceres*), clearly intended to locate the events precisely.¹¹ The Great Hunt shows officials and soldiers busy with the capture of beasts of every sort, their transport across the sea, and reception upon arrival. It almost certainly evokes great public games in Rome itself, which demanded a much greater variety of beasts, from many different parts of the Empire, than the small exhibitions of a provincial town.

Among the principal privileges and duties at this date of

the traditional Roman magistracies such as praetor and consul was that of organising and presiding at the games at the great Roman festivals. We may surely conclude that the two pavements commemorate spectacles given by the owner or members of his family in the course of holding such magistracies in the city.¹²

Another group of mosaics also deals with themes of entertainment, but in a much more light-hearted way. Children are shown parodying the activities of the elders: hunting small and mostly inoffensive animals and birds (43a) (figure 145), and driving chariots drawn by pairs of birds around a miniature circus (44). Other children perform as musicians and actors, while girls weave festive garlands (45, 43b). These scenes decorate the more private quarters of the villa; performances of this nature would be suitable for entertainments in a private house, and in less formal settings. Music also occurs as a theme in some of the (comparatively few) mythological scenes: Orpheus and the beasts, in a room with a fountain at its centre which may well have been used for musical entertainments (35); Arion playing the lyre as he rides his dolphin, at the centre of a marine scene (41).

Not public entertainment, but the leisured life of an aristocrat on his estate is the subject of the mosaic of the Small Hunt (30) (figure 137). Richly dressed hunters pursue boar, deer, and the small game of the local countryside; the centre is occupied by a sacrifice to Diana and an open-air picnic. There are numerous parallels with the African hunting scenes, but organisation and lay-out are more systematic than on the African examples, with special emphasis on the sacrifice and picnic.¹³

Other mosaics deal with the life of the villa itself, showing activities appropriate to the rooms where they are laid. Most of these are to be found in the baths, which were evidently open to a wider public than just the

⁹ Proculus Populonium, praetor (c.315), legate of Numidia and *praeses* of Byzacena, *consularis* of Sicily (c.327–31), prefect of the city of Rome (twice: 337, 351), ordinary consul (340): suggested by Carandini in *Filosofiana*, esp.31–52. Ceionii: Calderone, *ibid.*, 31–57, proposing a date perhaps as late as the 350s; and D. Vera, 'Temi e problemi della villa di Piazza Armerina', *Opus* 2.2, 1983, 581–93, proposing Ceionius Rufius Albinus as possible owner, and a date around 330–40. See also N. Duval, 'Pourquoi une identification? La place de Piazza Armerina dans l'architecture de l'antiquité tardive après la récente publication', *Opus* 2.2, 1983, 559–71, urging caution on the subject both of proprietor and of date; Duval, review of Rizza, *ibid.*, *BullaIEMA* 13, 1988–90 (1990–1), 361–73; R. Wilson, 'Luxury retreat, fourth-century style: a millionaire aristocrat in late Roman Sicily', *Opus* 2.2, 1983, 537–52, also preferring an anonymous aristocratic owner.

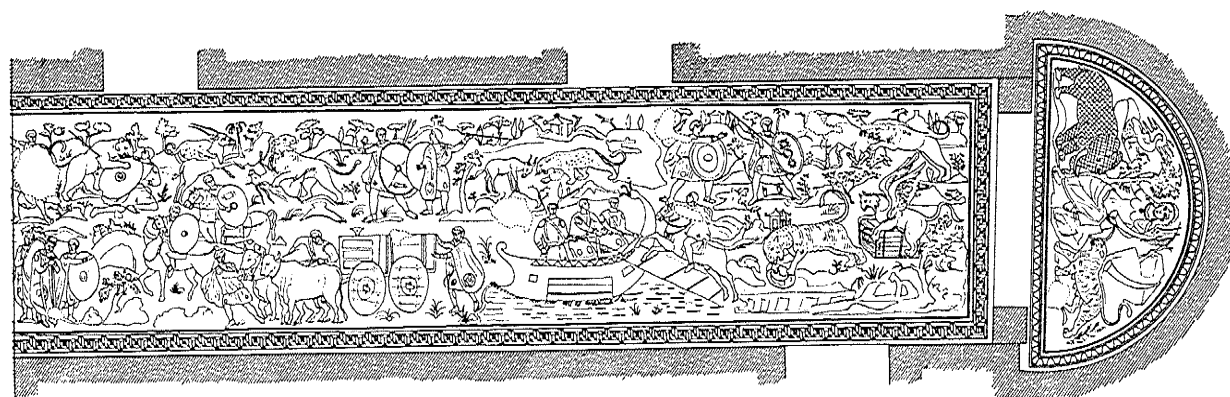
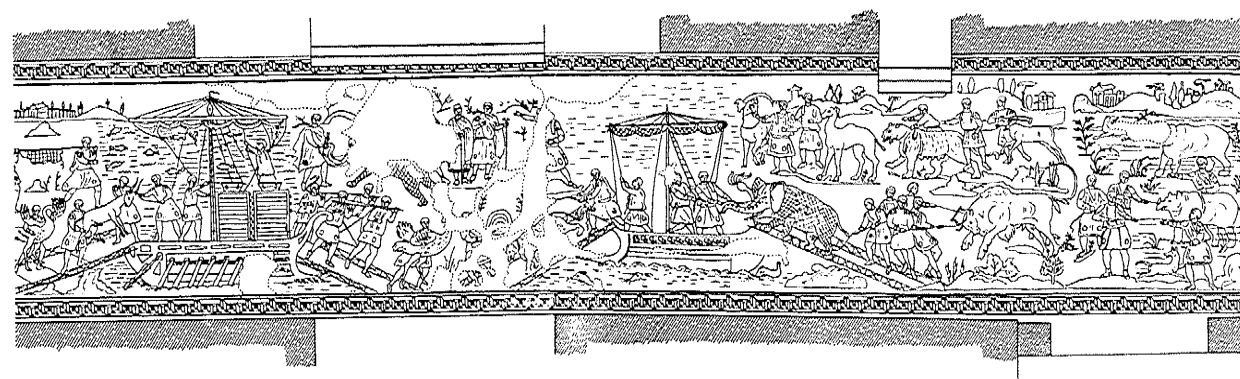
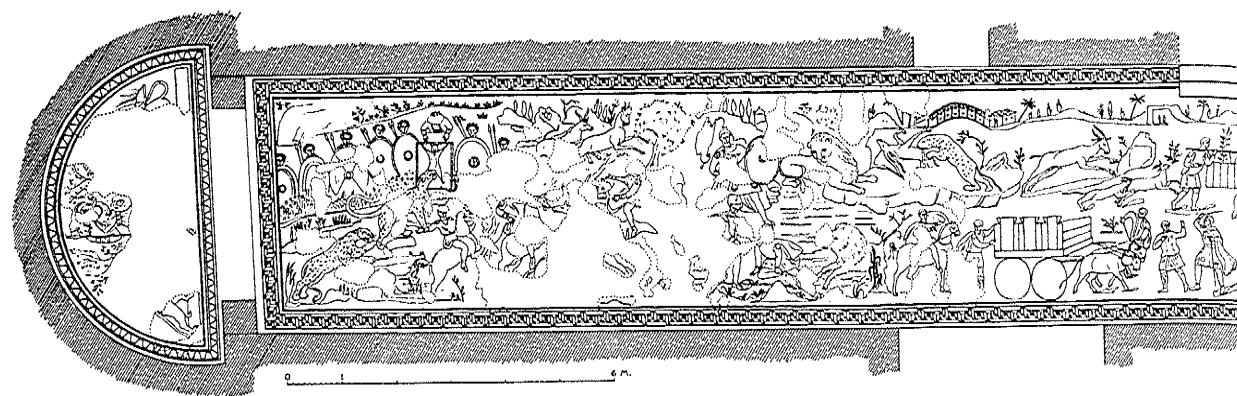
¹⁰ H. Lee, 'Athletics and the bikini girls from Piazza Armerina', *Stadion*

10, 1984, 45–76; contra M. Torelli, 'Piazza Armerina: note di iconologia', in Rizza, *ibid.*, 152, who sees them as dancers at the games.

¹¹ Cf. G.V. Gentili, 'Le gare del circo nel mosaico di Piazza Armerina', *BdA* 42, 1957, 7–27; J.H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses* (London 1986), 223–33.

¹² Cf. Settis, *MEFRA* 87, 1975, 944–56, though the literal geographical locations for the episodes which he proposes are not convincing; H. Mielsch, 'Realität und Imagination im Grossen Jagdmosaik von Piazza Armerina', in H.-U. Cain, H. Gabelmann, D. Salzmann eds., *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann* (Mainz am Rhein 1989), 459–66.

¹³ E. Ghedini, 'Iconografie urbane e maestranze africane nel mosaico della Piccola Caccia di Piazza Armerina', *RömMitt* 98, 1991, 323–35; for the African hunts, see above, ch.7, ns.33, 41, also ns.67, 68.

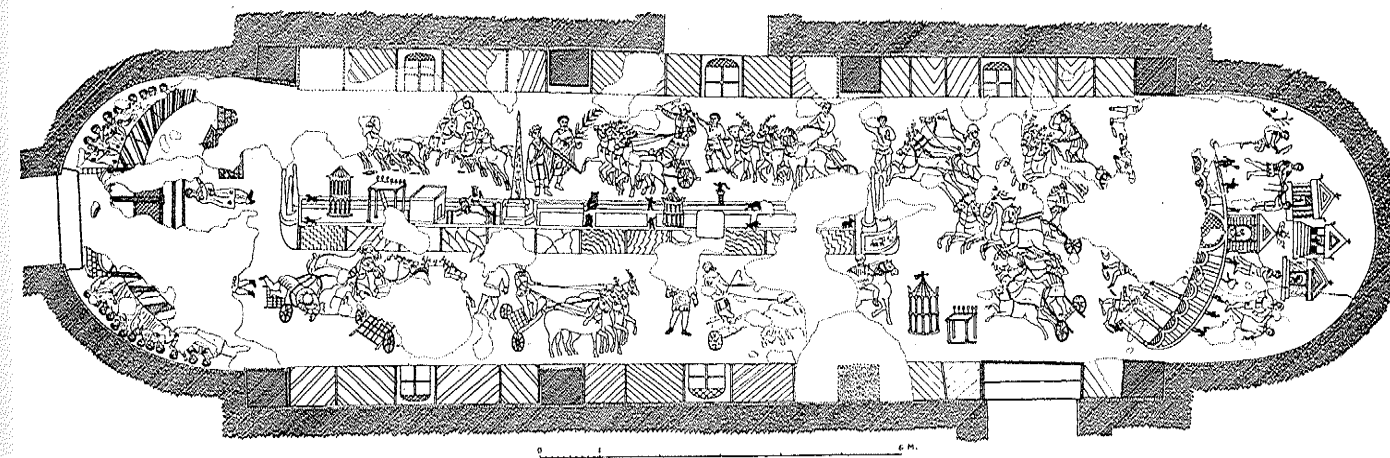


135 Piazza Armerina, corridor of Great Hunt (36), drawing. 59.63 m × 5 m.

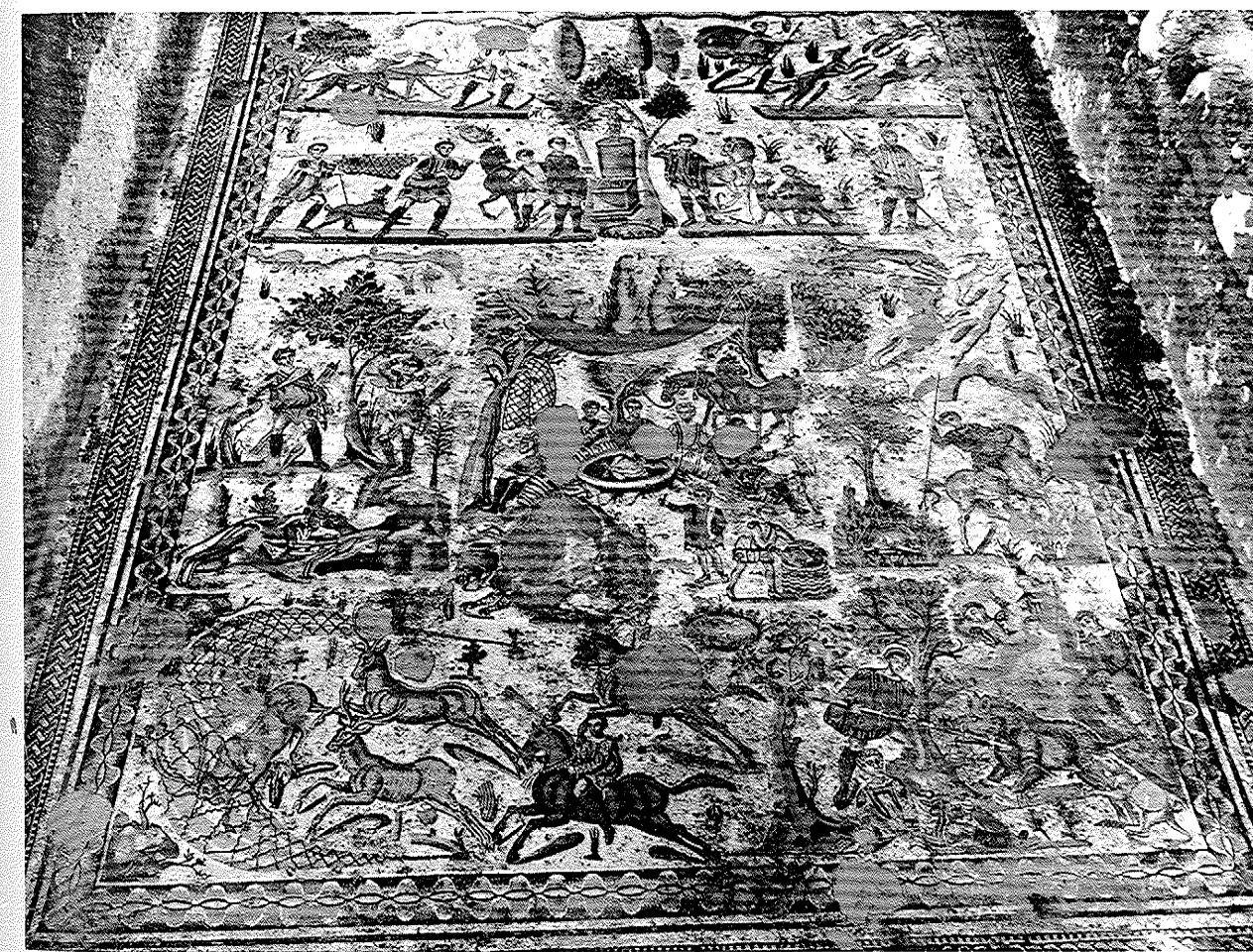
inhabitants of the villa. Thus in the vestibule (21) between the peristyle and the baths appears a lady, presumably the *domina* of the estate, with her two sons, escorted by hand-maids carrying equipment for the bath (figure 138). In the apses surrounding the *frigidarium* (4a–f) bathers are undressing and receiving the attentions of servants. A great deal of pomp and ceremony was attached to the appearance of an aristocrat at the baths, as is clear from the description given by the late fourth-century historian

Ammianus Marcellinus (28.4.8, 19); these images may be taken as the visual equivalent. More problematic is the damaged mosaic at the entrance to the whole villa (18), which showed a ceremony with wreathed figures holding candles and branches; closer identification is impossible in its fragmentary state, but it is most plausibly seen as a greeting for the *dominus* on his arrival.¹⁴

¹⁴ Refs in Settis, *MEFRA* 87, 1975, 926.



136 Piazza Armerina, Circus Races (3), drawing. 21.70 m × 5.39 m.



137 Piazza Armerina, Small Hunt (30). 5.90 m × 7.05 m.

The *frigidarium* (4i) itself is paved, appropriately, with a marine scene of Nereids and sea-monsters. Similar scenes appear in several other rooms of the villa, where the connection with water is less direct. They belong to the repertory associated with the life of luxury, and

suggest the teeming wealth of the sea which was perhaps especially appreciated in a villa sited far inland. At the same time, the Erotes who fish and swim echo the whimsical scenes of children's activities in other rooms of the private quarters; while children and Erotes appear as



138 Piazza Armerina, vestibule to baths (21), family and attendants entering baths. Maximum width 6.50 m.

vintagers in adjacent rooms off the ovoid portico (47, 49).

In most of the mosaics of the villa, therefore, sets of themes are skilfully interwoven, adapted to the nature and use of the areas that they decorate. Public entertainment, with its allusions to the great games of Rome, dominates in the official sections of the villa; private luxury and recreation in the domestic quarters. The individual scenes belong, almost without exception, to the repertory used in North Africa to evoke the prosperous life of the wealthy household and the status of its owners; but the manner in which they are used here is far more systematic than on the African examples. It looks as though the work of the mosaicists was closely overseen, to produce a carefully thought out programme of decoration, fully appropriate for the exceptional wealth and splendour of the owners.

One complex of mosaics stands apart from the rest: those of the huge triple-apsed dining-room or triconch (57) (figure 139). This is decorated entirely with mythological scenes, used sparingly elsewhere in the villa. The central area contains the Labours of Hercules, represented not in the usual way, by scenes of the struggle between the hero and his opponents, but by the bodies of the defeated

¹⁵ Cf. S. Sande, 'Dionysiac motifs in the Triconchos mosaics of Piazza Armerina', *ActaArchHist*, ser. alt. in 8°, 7, 1989, 23–53, who also suggests that the figure crowning Hercules may be Dionysus.

victims, strewn dead or dying over the pavement; among them a disproportionate place is occupied by the figures of the Thracian horsemen, the Bistones, usually one of the minor Labours (figure 146). Hercules himself appears in one of the side apses, wearing a Dionysiac leopardskin instead of his usual lionskin, and receiving the crown of immortality from a damaged figure, usually taken as Jupiter. In the central apse are the giants, struck down by Hercules' arrows (figure 140). The third apse shows the punishment of Lycurgus, who pursued the Dionysiac nymph Ambrosia; she turns into a vine in whose coils he is entwined, helplessly awaiting the onslaught of Dionysus and his followers. It is possible that other victims of Dionysus were represented in damaged sections of the central area: a scene of the Tyrrhenian pirates has been tentatively identified. Miniature scenes of metamorphoses cover the thresholds before the apses.¹⁵

Various explanations have been advanced to account for the selection of subject-matter in this room; most have depended on proposed identifications of the owner of the villa.¹⁶ It is clear that the scenes are not chosen purely for narrative interest, but are designed to represent with the

¹⁶ Cf. Settis, *MEFRA* 87, 1975, 965–82; Carandini, in *Filosofiana* 83–6; a different approach in R. Amedick, 'Herakles im Speisesaal', *RömMitt* 101, 1994, 103–19.



139 Piazza Armerina, triconch (57), drawing. Central area 12.20 m × 12.15 m.

greatest vividness the victorious might of Hercules and to a lesser extent of Dionysus, and the fate of their opponents. The rendering emphasises the writhing bodies of the victims in their death agonies, the blood flowing from wounds, or their pathetic expressions; the effect on those who entered the room must have been powerful. Part of a colossal statue of Hercules was found elsewhere in the villa, and may have stood in the apse of the Basilica; the owner, whoever he may have been, seems to have been a special devotee of the god. In the late paganism of the fourth century AD, Hercules was regarded as a prototype for victorious endeavour and triumph over evil, a triumph in which his followers might hope to share. The scenes contrast in a striking way with the prevailing secular character of the decoration in the rest of the villa; but their aim would have been to contribute further to the glorification of the owner through analogy with the deeds and power of his patron deity.

It is very widely agreed that the mosaics should be

attributed to one or more African workshops, almost certainly based in Carthage. The vast majority of the figured scenes use subjects, motifs, and methods of composition which had evolved over the previous century in the North African mosaics; on many, details of design and execution recur almost exactly on mosaics from Carthage and its region. The parallels are so close that they go beyond what can be attributed to the circulation of patterns or the imitation of imported models, and can only be explained as the work of craftsmen trained in specific workshop practices. Whether the large numbers of mosaicists, masters and assistants, who must have been involved were brought to Sicily expressly for the commission, or whether some sort of branch workshop of the main *officina* was established on the island is harder to determine. But it seems evident that the lordly owners of the house explicitly desired mosaics that would create an atmosphere of wealth and luxury and convey clear messages about their status and activities.



140 Piazza Armerina, triconch, apse with wounded giants. 7.60 m × 5.22 m.

The style and subjects that had evolved over the previous century in the African workshops were ideally suited for the task.¹⁷

Only a small selection of the mosaics can be described here in greater detail. The porticoes of the great peristyle (19d), over thirty metres long, are paved with a uniform design: a grid of guilloche, in which are set circles of beribboned laurel wreath, alternately green on a black ground and yellow on red (figure 141). The wreaths contain the heads or *protomai* of animals: felines, antelopes, bulls, and other typical beasts of the amphitheatre *venationes*; several of the creatures, such as elephant and ostrich, are seen in foreshortened frontal view. The animals anticipate the theme of the Great Hunt in the long corridor above, to which the visitor would pass from the porticoes; the design, with geometric or floral filling, is a favourite in the repertory of the fourth-century workshops of Carthage and its vicinity.¹⁸

The corridor of the Great Hunt is 200 Roman feet long, or about 60 metres (figure 135). The figures are set approximately in two registers, but without formal divi-

sion between them; the horizon is closed at the top by a continuous strip of rocky landscape, on which stand trees and occasional small buildings. Further landscape elements are distributed among the figures, but for the most part they move against a neutral white ground; there is a spatial ambivalence between a two- and three-dimensional rendering, similar to that seen in the typical African hunts. Several of the episodes take place in a watery setting, indicated by broken horizontal or zigzag lines across the pavement, but not further separated from the scenes on land. Against this background, animals of great variety are hunted, captured, and transported in cages and wagons (figures 142, 143). In the centre they are simultaneously loaded and unloaded on opposite sides of two ships; on a patch of land in the middle a group of officials waits to receive them. These wear a semi-military uniform (cylindrical caps, heavy cloaks, mushroom-headed staffs), characteristic of the early fourth century; a similar, though even more richly dressed figure appears at another point in the mosaic, protected by two bodyguards, directing the capture of some of the beasts.¹⁹ The

à Carthage', *MEFR* 81, 1969, 238, with refs.; Carthage, Maison du Cryptoportique, *Actes du IV^e Colloque sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, Strasbourg 1988* 1 Carthage et son territoire dans l'Antiquité (Paris 1990), 160.

¹⁹ The latter is the so-called 'old dominus', identified by some commentators as a portrait of the Emperor Maximian, while the central figure has been thought to be Maxentius: refs. in Dunbabin, *MRNA* 201–4; Wilson, *Piazza Armerina* 87–9. Both men are more plausibly to be seen as officials directing operations.

¹⁷ Cf. Dunbabin, *MRNA* 197–201; Wilson, *AJA* 86, 1982, 413–15, 424–8; *id.*, *Piazza Armerina* 44–68. R. Camerata-Scovazzo, 'I mosaici geometrici di Piazza Armerina', *CronCatania* 18, 1979 (1984), 205–10, argues that the geometric pavements do not share in the general 'African' character, but depend rather on Italian schemes, many of them well established in Sicily from an earlier date, and should be assigned to local Sicilian workshops; against this, see Wilson, *Sicily* (cit. n. 2), 250, n. 67. The geometric mosaics and motifs still need detailed study.

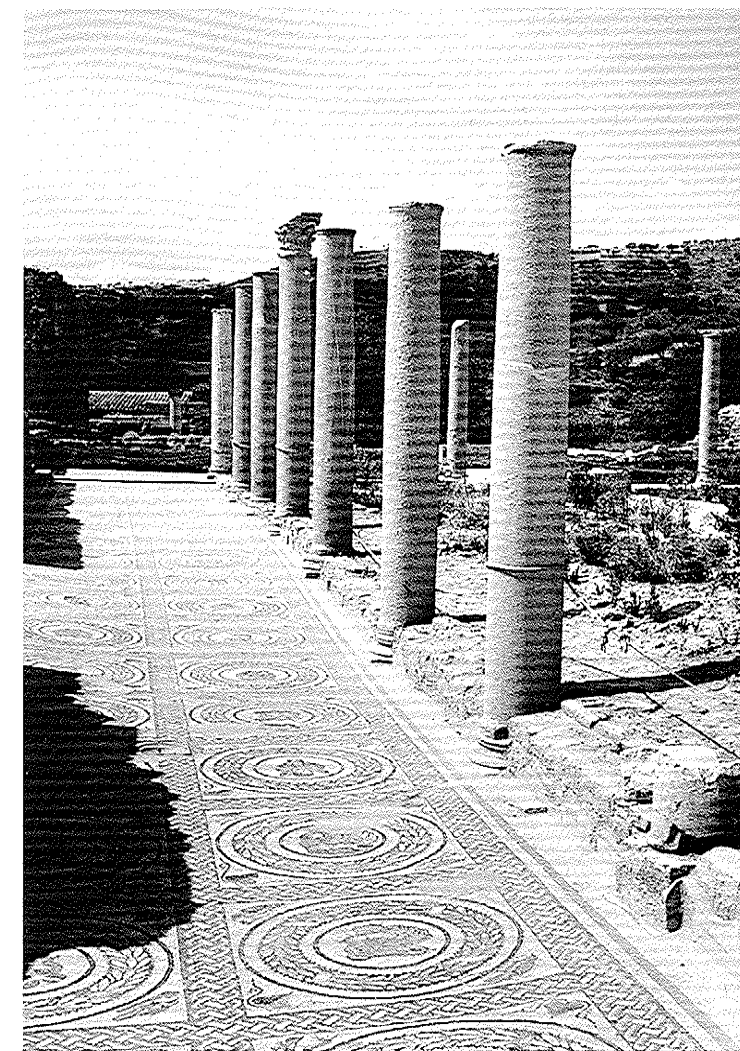
¹⁸ Cf. R. Hanoune, 'Trois pavements de la Maison de la Course de Chars

hunters, on foot and horseback, also frequently wear military or semi-military uniform.

Recent studies of the mosaic have thrown light on its method of composition. A series of 'sutures', or vertical seams, perceptible especially in the manner of laying the white tesserae of the background, allow seven main sections to be distinguished (for example figure 142, between cart and man behind it pushing; figure 143, between bison and group of men). Variations in technique, for instance in the size of tesserae and the materials, also differentiate the sections. These sections may be taken to indicate the work of different teams of mosaicists, between whom the long corridor was divided (though teams may have executed more than one section each). Differences in style have also been identified between the sections, in particular between more conservative work in the north (left) and more innovative in the south (right) areas. Undoubtedly, however, a single designer must have been responsible for planning the lay-out of the pavement as a whole.²⁰

The differences in style are in any case minor; the overall effect is more or less uniform. Most striking is the way in which colour is used to form figures and objects. (plates 21, 22) The landscape elements are rendered as a series of broad stripes and patches, mostly in bright red and several shades of green. The modelling of the animals is also handled by means of such stripes: limbs, muscles, and the volume of the body are outlined by broad bands of three or four tones of a colour, ranging from bright patches for the highlights to near-black. These bands do not shade into one another, but are simply juxtaposed, sometimes with a line of overlap like a zip-fastener where two bands meet. Contrasting, and quite unrealistic colours are sometimes used for shaded parts, so that the legs and neck of a tigress become grey-green. The effect can be powerfully volumetric, for instance in the figure of the prancing bison led by the horns, or the oxen pulling a cart. The human figures, in contrast, are much flatter and more linear. Many of them wear brightly ornamented embroidered tunics (a style of dress increasingly popular in the fourth century), whose decoration hides the form of the body beneath; otherwise tunics and cloaks are rendered by a series of linear folds. Gestures are lively, but

²⁰ A. Ricci, in *Filosofiana* 197–210, who concludes that there may have been four groups at work. The insistence on seeing specific geographical settings for the scenes, here and by Carandini, *ibid.* 94–103, is implausible, if only because sections and scenes do not always correspond.



141 Piazza Armerina, portico of peristyle (19d).

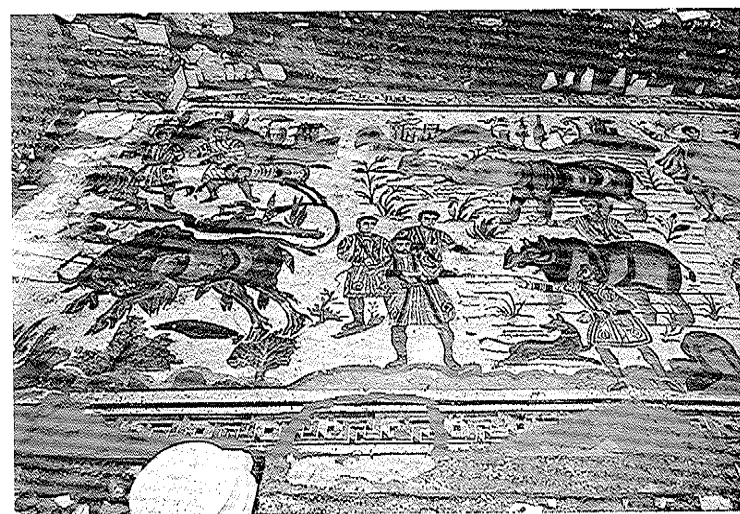
often inorganic; limbs are strongly outlined. The heads are usually round, hair shown either as a close-fitting cap or as a set of wriggly lines of two colours. The features also are strongly outlined, especially the eyes, with very heavy lids and brows. Finally, objects are rendered by areas of undifferentiated colour which make them entirely two-dimensional: the soldiers' shields are big disks of green or red, the side of the ships a flat expanse ornamented with patterns taken from the mosaicists' standard decorative repertory.

The private apartments, rooms 40–5, open off the long corridor through a semi-circular portico (40b), where Erotes fishing from boats echo pleasingly the water splashing in a fountain in the central court²¹ (figure 144;

²¹ The Erotes, here and elsewhere in the villa, have marks in form of 'v' or 'x' on their foreheads, a feature found also on mosaics at Carthage and some parts of Byzacena, and evidently a workshop trick: Wilson, *Piazza Armerina* 67, n. 41.



142 Piazza Armerina, corridor of the Great Hunt (36), detail showing animal cage loaded on ox-cart.



143 Piazza Armerina, corridor of the Great Hunt (36), detail showing capture of rhinoceros and bison.

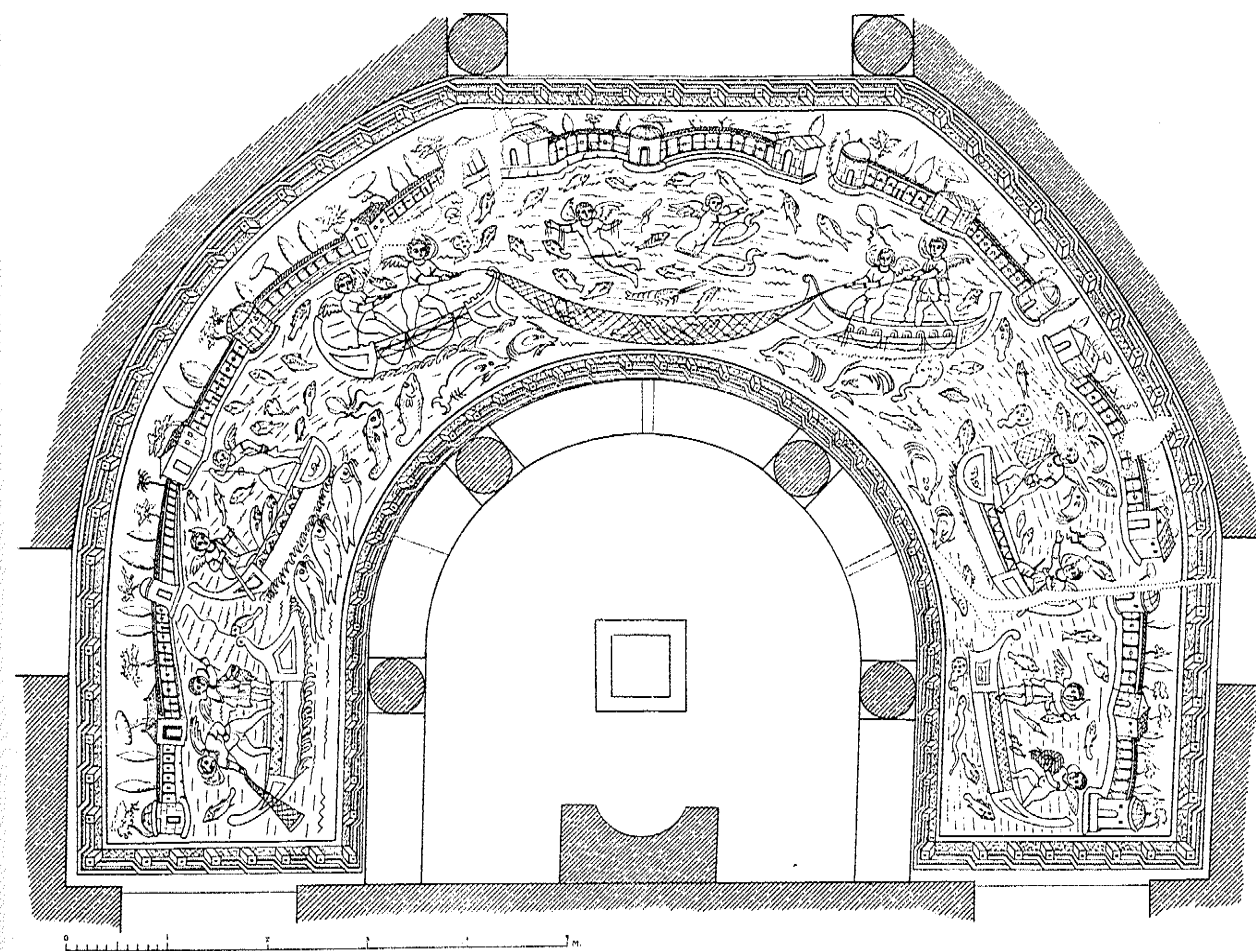
see also plate 23). The sea is portrayed by straight or zigzag lines, black and blue-grey, set densely on a white ground, a typical African procedure, while beneath the boats it forms broken waves; at the top a row of coastal villas with long porticoes and trees behind them close off the scene and add another allusion to the luxurious life of a Roman aristocrat. One of the rooms beyond this (43) contains in its forepart the scene of the Hunting Children (figure 145), while in an alcove behind (probably for a bed) girls pick flowers and weave garlands. The boy hunters are arranged on three registers, separated by straight strips of grey groundline. These act as a convenient division of the room, without attempting to create any sense of depth.

²² Above, ch.7, n.42; cf. Salomonson, *Mosaïque aux Chevaux*, 32–7.

The figures are distributed against the white background, on which some cast shadows; branches laden with fruit are strewn thickly around them. The boys are dressed as *venatores*, armed with spear and shield, and hunt creatures such as a peacock, pheasant, goat and hare. Mock drama is provided by the scenes of the boy bitten in the leg by a tiny quadruped, perhaps a jerboa, and by another who flees from a large rooster. An exact parallel, for the overall theme and for some of the details, is found on the border from the House of the Horses in Carthage, perhaps a decade or two earlier²² (plate 18). The design is more frankly decorative than in the complex scenes of the Great Hunt; the mosaicist is not troubled by the need to maintain a balance between two- and three-dimensional effects, nor to create any sense of narrative.

The mosaics of the triconch form a group apart. Hercules' victims are placed against a plain white ground, their nearly life-size bodies densely packing the space (figures 140, 146). They create a powerful sense of volume, with bulging muscles, writhing limbs, violently foreshortened and distorted postures; some, like the giants in the central apse, seem to burst forward from the ground on which they are set. This volume is achieved through the use of broad stripes of colour similar to those used for the animals of the Great Hunt; but the effect is here carried much further, to emphasise the twisted poses and the exaggerated muscles. It is reinforced by the use of work-lines, whereby the tesserae themselves are set in lines to follow the curves of a part of the body. The procedure is one peculiar to mosaic, and used with more restraint on other mosaics in the villa, for instance in the animals of the Great Hunt. Another practice also found more freely here is the use of areas of contrasting or complementary colour, green merging with the bronze flesh-tones of the giants, for example. Pathetic expressions, with open mouths and rolling or sunken eyes, add to the emotional impact.

Whether the differences between the various mosaics at Piazza Armerina reflect the operation of different designers or different workshops is impossible to ascertain. Undoubtedly numerous teams of craftsmen were at work, and further detailed studies of technique similar to those carried out by Ricci for the Great Hunt might allow groups of pavements linked by common features to be distinguished. On the other hand, the major stylistic differences correspond very largely to differences in the function of the space decorated and the nature of the subject. It is safer at the moment to conclude that the



144 Piazza Armerina, semi-circular portico (40b), Erotes fishing, drawing.



145 Piazza Armerina, Hunting Children (43a), detail.



146 Piazza Armerina, triconch (57), victims of Hercules, detail of Bistonian Horseman and Bull.



147 Tellaro, villa, Hunting Scenes, detail with tigress attacking fallen hunter. 6.40 m × 6.20 m. Second half of the fourth century AD.

mosaics of Piazza Armerina illustrate the range of stylistic possibilities available within the compass of one or more African-based workshops, from decorative two-dimensional whimsy through lively narrative to violence and emotional force. Even within the mosaics of the triconch, so different in most respects from the other mosaics of the villa, the scene of Lycurgus and Ambrosia is closed across the bottom by vine scrolls in which Erotes pick the grapes, in a manner very similar to the playful Erotes and children elsewhere in the villa.

III

Two more Sicilian villas of the fourth century, nearly comparable to Piazza Armerina in size and splendour, were discovered in the 1970s; neither has yet been published in detail. One, at Patti Marina on the north coast, was apparently destroyed in an earthquake around AD 400; evidence for its date of construction is not yet available. It replaced an earlier villa on the site, with polychrome mosaics, probably of the third century. The later villa also has mosaics, predominantly floral-geometric, some with animals in compartments; the ornamental designs belong in the African repertory, but the relationship to African models is much less close than that at Piazza Armerina, and they are likely to be the products of a local workshop which has adapted the African designs.²³

The second villa is on the River Tellaro, near ancient Helorus. Preliminary publication has revealed mosaics in four areas, two with predominantly floral/ornamental designs, the others with more substantial figured scenes. In one, a scroll border frames a damaged panel, with Greek inscriptions identifying it as the rare scene of the weighing of the body of Hector against the ransom that Priam has brought to Achilles. The other is entirely occupied by a hunting scene, within a border of perspective maeander (figure 147). The hunt is composed in a manner similar to those at Piazza Armerina, with disconnected episodes arranged in informal registers, amid landscape elements consisting of stripy rocks and trees. Several of the individual episodes also resemble those at Piazza Armerina, such as the open-air picnic in the foreground. In the centre sits a huge female figure, recalling the personifications identified as Mauretania and Arabia or India in the apses at the end of the corridor of the Great Hunt at Piazza Armerina, and perhaps here intended to represent Africa. On one side of her, a huge tigress attacks

a colossal fallen hunter; on the other, three much smaller figures of officials are overseeing a laden cart led through water.²⁴

The Tellaro mosaics have a *terminus post quem* of the mid-fourth century, provided by coins of Constans and Constantius II beneath them, the latest dated to AD 346. The style of the hunting scene differs considerably from those at Piazza Armerina, despite the parallels of composition and motif. It is much more crowded, with figures packed densely together among the landscape elements; these form a more dramatic setting of jagged and uneven mountains. The movements of man and beast are lively and agitated, with exaggerated gestures and fluttering cloaks. There is also a certain incoherence in the combination of the various episodes, for instance the difference in scale between the figures, in marked contrast to the carefully thought-out organisation of the Piazza Armerina hunts; the aim here is to create an effect of the greatest possible liveliness and drama.

The question whether workmen of African origin were responsible for the Tellaro mosaics is again difficult to answer, especially in the absence of full publication. Despite several 'African' elements, parallels as close as those for some of the Piazza Armerina mosaics cannot at present be established. Provisionally it may be suggested that the workshops which came to execute the Piazza Armerina floors established themselves on the island, remaining in close contact with the home office in Carthage, but gradually developing to suit local conditions. The rare mythological scene with its Greek inscriptions suggests a special commission, and a patron proud to display his Greek culture.

The question has further implications, concerning the growth of a *koine*, a common decorative language, in the central and western Mediterranean area. In the course of the fourth century numerous regions saw the appearance of mosaics of a type whose emergence in Africa was traced in the previous chapter: big polychrome figured scenes, which treat the floor as a two-dimensional surface to be covered by an all-over design, but which use certain conventions for the rendering of landscape and setting to

retain a limited sense of depth. The subject-matter of such scenes frequently refers to the hunting field, the world of the games, or the life of the country estate. At the same time ornamental pavements, or the ornamental portions of figured pavements, often draw on the repertory favoured by the African workshops: elaborate polychrome designs, making much use of vegetal elements, such as patterns of laurel wreaths and acanthus scrolls. The occasional appearance of such designs in Italy in the fourth century was seen in chapter 4, while their more frequent use in Spain will be discussed below.²⁵ There is no doubt that a certain community of decorative language emerged in the mosaics of the western half of the Mediterranean in the fourth century: they shared common aims, and drew at least in part on the same vocabulary. For the most part, however, the resemblance is superficial, and the regions retained their individual character. Some movement of craftsmen from one part to the other undoubtedly took place, but many of the parallels can be explained either by the circulation of patterns, or by the wishes of the patrons, who made similar demands on craftsmen in different regions.

Much closer, however, are the resemblances between the mosaics of the central region of North Africa (Carthage and its territory, and Byzacena), those just discussed in Sicily, and also several on the neighbouring island of Sardinia, which indicate more constant contacts within this area.²⁶ That these consisted not just of the circulation of patterns but also of the frequent movement of men and materials back and forth is demonstrated by the exact recurrence of decorative designs, including small tricks of technique which are surely to be seen as workshop habits.

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²³ G. Voza, *Kokalos* 22–3, 1976–7, 574–9, pl. CXIV; Voza, *Kokalos* 26–7, 2.1, 1980–1, 690–3, pls. CXXXVIII.2–CXXXIX; Voza, 'Le ville romane del Tellaro e di Patti in Sicilia e il problema dei rapporti con l'Africa', in *150-Jahr-Feier Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom*, 4–7 Dezember 1979 (*RömMitt-EH* 25, Mainz 1982), 202–9, pls. 83–5; Voza, 'Aspetti e problemi dei nuovi monumenti d'arte musiva in Sicilia', *CMGR* 111, 14–15; Voza, *Kokalos* 30–1, 2.2, 1984–5, 659–61, pls. CXV–CXVIII; Wilson, *Sicily* (cit. n. 2), 204–5, 209, figs. 168, 170.

²⁴ Voza, *Kokalos* 18–19, 1972–3, 190–2, pls. XI–XLI; Voza, *Kokalos* 22–3, 1976–7, 572–3, pls. CX–CXI; Voza, 'I mosaici della "Villa del Tellaro"', in *Archeologia nella Sicilia sud-orientale* (eds. P. Pelegatti, G. Voza, Naples 1973), 175–9, pls. LVII–LIX; Voza, in *150-Jahr-Feier Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom* (cit. n. 23), 202–9, pls. 86–8; Voza, *CMGR* 111, 6–18; Wilson, *Sicily* (cit. n. 2), 206–8, fig. 169.

²⁵ Above, ch. 4, ns. 41–2; below, ch. 9, section 11.

²⁶ S. Angiolillo, *MosAntIt, Sardinia* (Rome 1981), 209–13; especially close to African prototypes are the mosaics from Villa Speciosa, *ibid.*, 113–15, nos. 114–16, pl. XLVII; G. Pianu, M. Pinna, C. Tronchetti, A. Usai, *Archeologia Medievale* 9, 1982, 387–409. Cf. also Angiolillo, 'Il mosaico romano in Sardegna: modelli e maestranze', *CMGR* 111, 451–60; Wilson, 'Sardinia and Sicily during the Roman Empire: aspects of the archaeological evidence', *Kokalos* 26–7, 1980–1, 235.

The Iberian peninsula

I

The richness of the Iberian peninsula in mosaics has been revealed comparatively recently, with the great increase in archaeological exploration and publication that has taken place in Spain and Portugal since the 1980s. New discoveries both in the towns and of villas, often very rich, in the countryside, have made it clear that the Iberian provinces were among the leading producers of mosaics in the Roman world, especially in the later Empire. Fuller evaluation of recent finds is needed to reveal the variations in regional production and the character of the different centres; and, as in many other parts of the Roman world, there are still comparatively few dates securely established by excavation. It is clear that a number of different currents influenced this production, which remained in many ways heterogeneous; yet in no sense were the Spanish mosaic workshops, except in their earliest phases, mere derivatives of those in other regions of the Empire.¹

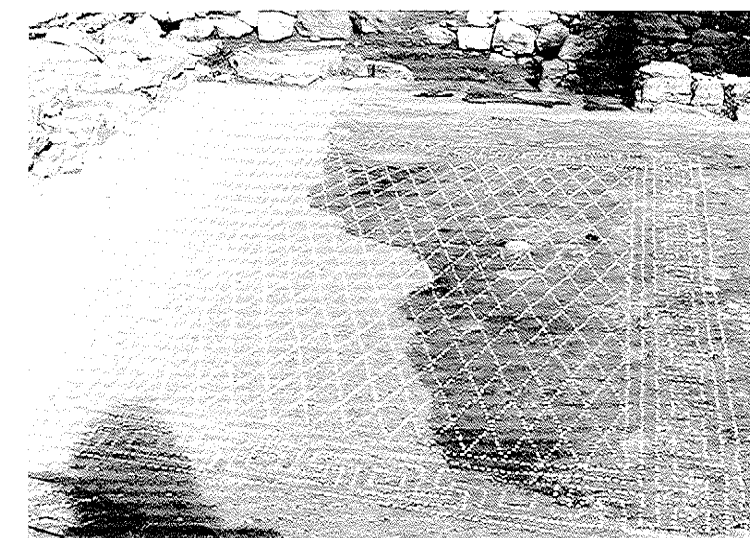
An indigenous tradition of decorated pavements is attested by finds of pebble mosaics with simple geometric designs such as chequer and meander in native Iberian sites dating from the seventh to the fourth centuries BC, especially at Cástulo (Jaén); there is no connection with the pebble mosaics of the Greek world.² The main development, however, begins after the Roman conquest of the late third and second centuries BC. Many sites, especially along the Mediterranean coast and in the valley of the Ebro, show a variety of pavement types closely comparable to those in use in late Republican Italy, and especially pavements of *signinum*. Since numerous examples have appeared in the former Carthaginian colony Carthago Nova (Cartagena), it is tempting to associate them with

the Punic tradition; but none can be shown to be earlier than the Roman conquest, and most belong probably to the late second and first centuries BC.³ There can be little doubt that the technique and styles of decoration were introduced to Spain from Italy; the craftsmen were imported originally to carry out construction work in the new Roman foundations, but rapidly established themselves also in the older centres or among the more Romanised of the native populations, and founded local workshops.

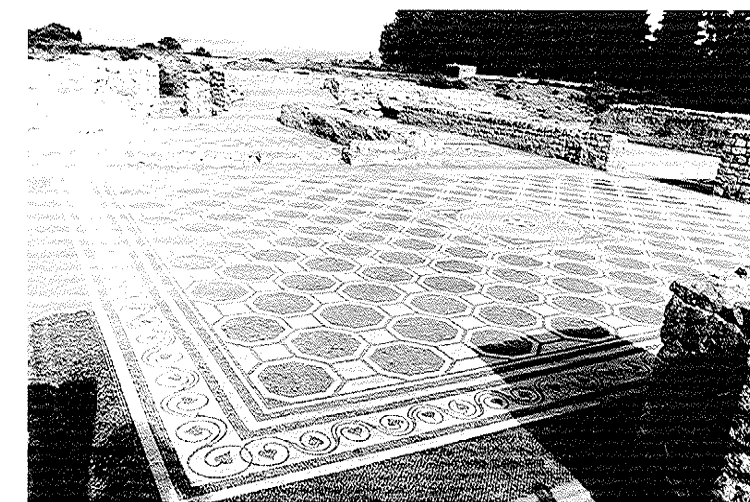
The early, Italian derived pavement styles are well exemplified at Emporiae, the former Greek colony of Emporion (Ampurias, Empúries). Pavements of *signinum* have been found here in several houses of the Greek port city, the so-called Neapolis, where they appear to date from the second and first centuries BC. They are decorated with designs of white and a few black tesserae, in typical patterns such as meander, grid of lozenges, and shield of triangles. Some also contain Greek inscriptions: one reads, for instance, *chaire agathos daimon*, 'welcome good spirit', written across the entrance to a room, another *hedykoitos*, 'pleasant relaxation' (presumably at the symposium)⁴ (figure 148). Further pavements of *signinum* and other late Republican types such as *terrazzo* and *crustae* pavements are found in the early phases of houses of the Roman city higher up the hill, founded around the beginning of the first century BC. Later additions to these houses contain pavements of a different type, though also of clear Italian inspiration: large expanses of black-and-white geometric mosaic, covering the floor with all-over patterns in a manner reminiscent of the Italian styles of the mid-first century AD, as well as simple *opus sectile* (figure 149). One house also contained examples of the alternative, Hellenistic mosaic tradition: small figured

emblemata set in their own trays, certainly imported from Italy where replicas of the same compositions exist.⁵ The best *emblemata* from Ampurias is unique in its subject-matter; it too was found in the Roman city, though its exact findspot is not known. It shows the Sacrifice of Iphigeneia in Aulis, led to the altar by a group which includes Odysseus and the seer Calchas, as well as her grieving father Agamemnon (figure 150). They are crowded close together around an altar of rocks, against a backdrop of hangings suspended from a wooden building, which must be intended to evoke a stage setting. The happy outcome is alluded to in the top right corner, where a tiny figure of Artemis holds the deer that was miraculously substituted for Iphigeneia at the last moment. The *emblemata* belongs fully in the tradition of picture-mosaics, and may safely be taken to reproduce a Greek painting; despite its small scale, the mosaic suggests an original of considerable psychological force. The workmanship is fine, the tesserae about two to four millimetres square, densely set, with a fine range of shades in the nude parts of the figures and their garments, and expressive faces. Only a few infelicities, such as the incongruous patch on which Artemis stands, and some contradictions in the perspective of the building and hangings, suggest the mosaicist's difficulties in translating his model into stone. Without parallel in Spain, this *emblemata* too is surely an import.⁶

The use of black-and-white mosaic established itself rapidly. Black-and-white geometric mosaics attributable to the first century AD are found in the highly Romanised Hispania Tarraconensis, for instance at Baetulo (Badalona) and other sites in the region of Barcino (Barcelona).⁷ By the second century they appear with a certain frequency in the urban centres and some villas in more distant regions: Augusta Emerita (Mérida) in Lusitania, for example, and the coastal areas of Baetica and the Levant.⁸ The repertory of motifs used is still very close to that of their Italian counterparts. Figured compositions



148 Emporiae, Neapolis, *signinum* pavement with Greek inscription *Hedykoitos*. Second to first century BC.



149 Emporiae, House 1, black-and-white mosaic. Probably first century AD.

in black-and-white similar to the Italian also occur, with conventional themes such as the marine *thiasos*.⁹ More original subject-matter is found in the frieze which surrounds the peristyle of a villa in Marbella (Málaga) (figure

which does not correspond); A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Historia del Arte Hispánico*, 1, 2, *La Antigüedad* (Madrid 1981), 160, fig. 42. There is no evidence for the date; Blanco suggests the last third of the first century AD, others prefer the first century BC.

⁷ X. Barral i Altet, *Les mosaïques romaines et médiévales de la Regio Laetana (Barcelona et ses environs)* (Barcelona 1978), 13–15, and esp. 81–7, nos. 53–61.

⁸ *CMEsp* 1, 14–18; Ramallo Asensio, *Mosaicos romanos* (cit. n. 3), 141–54.

⁹ A. Balil, 'Sobre el mosaico romano bicromo en la Península Ibérica', *XI Congreso Nacional de Arqueología, Mérida 1968* (Zaragoza 1970), 540–8; Ramallo Asensio, *ibid.*, 141–54.

¹ See the valuable study by S. Ramallo Asensio, 'Talleres y escuelas musivas en la Península Ibérica', *Homenaje Balil*, 135–80.

² D. Fernández-Galiano, 'New light on the origins of floor mosaics', *Antf* 62.2, 1982, 235–8; Fernández-Galiano, 'Influencias orientales en la musivaria hispanica', *CMGR* 111, 412–17; above, ch. 1, n. 35.

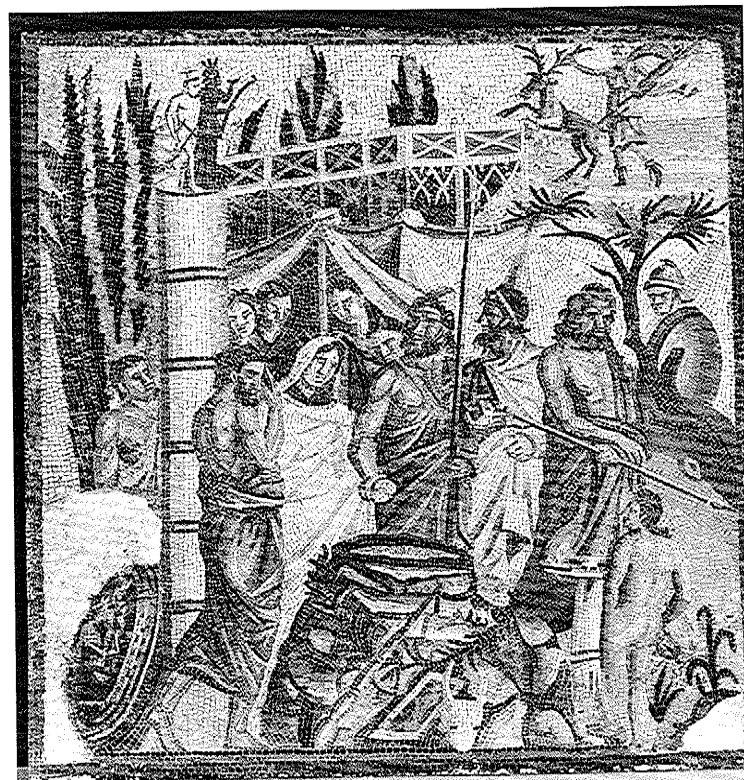
³ S. Ramallo Asensio, *Mosaicos romanos de Carthago Nova (Hispania Citerior)* (Murcia 1985), 31–58, nos. 1–51; 157–9; several of them contain

Latin inscriptions. For the Punic traditions, cf. above, ch. 7, ns. 5, 6.

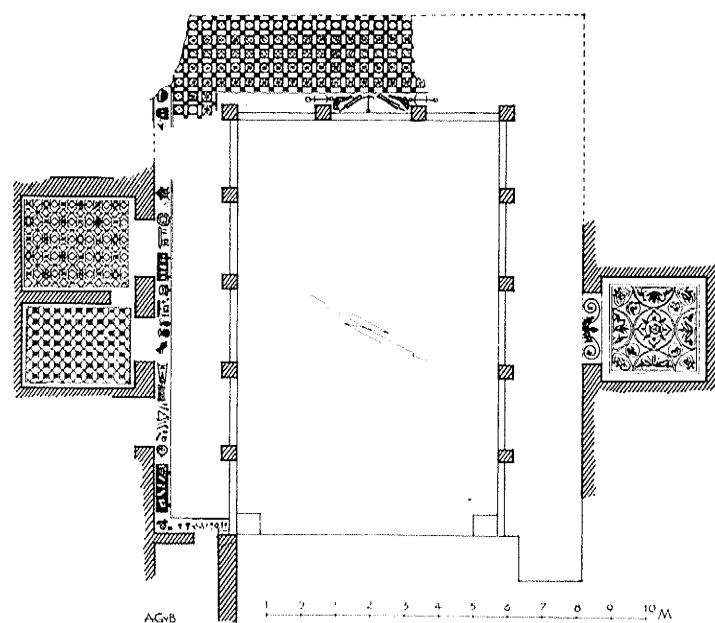
⁴ The material from Ampurias is not yet fully published, but cf. R. Marcet, E. Sanmartí, *Empúries* (Barcelona 1990), 96, 106–13. For the inscriptions: R. Olmos Romera, 'Hedykoitos y Agathos Daimon. Inscripciones en dos mosaicos tardohelenísticos de Ampurias', *Mosaicos Romanos*, 43–59; R. Mar. J. Ruiz de Arbulo, 'Dos casas con inscripciones en griego en la Neapolis Ampuritana', *ibid.* 61–5.

⁵ Marcet, Sanmartí, *ibid.*, 148–60; A. Balil, 'Arte helenístico en el Levante español, II. Tres emblemata ampuritana', *ArchEspArq* 34, 1961, 41–52. For the architecture and chronology of the houses cf. M. Santos Retolaza, 'Distribución y evolución de la vivienda urbana tardorrepublicana y altoimperial en Ampurias', *La casa urbana hispanorromana: ponencias y comunicaciones* (Zaragoza 1991), 19–34; the *emblemata* come from rooms around the peristyle of House 1, added probably in the second half of the first century BC.

⁶ M.A. Elvira, 'Sobre el original griego de un mosaico emporitano', *ArchEspArq* 54, 1981, 3–25 (not the famous painting of the subject by Timanthes, of which Pliny (*H.N.* 35.73) and other authors tell us,



150 Emporiae, *emblemata* with Sacrifice of Iphigeneia. Museo Monográfico de las Excavaciones, Ampurias. 0.55 m × 0.60 m. First century BC to first century AD.



151 Marbella, villa, plan of preserved section, showing frieze of cooking implements around left portico, and Room B to right. Probably late second century AD.

151). A succession of cooking and household implements are displayed in black against a plain white ground, sometimes as if hanging from the wall; various forms of food and drink are also set out, sometimes in white silhouette on black tables or trays, including for instance a rabbit, chicken, and pork ribs. The intention is evidently to place before the eyes of visitors the accoutrements of a luxurious household and of a welcoming meal.¹⁰

In the course of the second century AD a specifically Hispanic characteristic makes its appearance: the use of limited touches of colour in otherwise bichrome mosaics. One room (B) in the Marbella villa, for instance, contained a polychrome Gorgoneion and other polychrome touches in the compartments of an otherwise black-and-white geometric design.¹¹ The same technique is applied in some figured mosaics, picking out certain parts of an otherwise black-and-white design in colour. In the House of Neptune at Italica, a frieze of pygmies in a Nilotic setting surrounds a marine scene, at whose centre is Neptune riding his pair of sea-horses (figure 152). All are in black-and-white except the figure of the god and his team, who stand out in natural flesh-tones and shades of green.¹² More extensive but less naturalistic use of colour appears at a later date in a mosaic at Emerita. In a scene of Orpheus and the beasts, Orpheus himself wears a red cloak and has touches of ochre in hat, belt and shoes, and of blue glass in his sleeves; a few of the beasts have details in red and ochre. Several other subjects in black-and-white with occasional touches of colour (among them a Nilotic frieze and panels with vintage and athletic scenes), as well as black-and-white geometric patterns, make up the pavement.¹³

¹⁰ A. García y Bellido, 'El mosaico de tema culinario de Marbella', *Hommages à Marcel Renard* 3 (Brussels 1969), 241–6; *CMEsp* 111, 81–3, no. 55, figs. 22–3, pls. 62–6; A. Balil, 'Un bodegón en mosaico hallado en Marbella (Málaga)', *Baetica. Estudios de arte, geografía y historia* 6, 1983, 159–70. The date is probably late second century. Other mosaics in the house have black-and-white geometric designs, except Room B, discussed below (n. 11).

¹¹ *CMEsp* 111, 83, nos. 56–7, pl. 65, inaccurately described as black-and-white; C. Posac Mon, 'La villa romana de Marbella', *NAHisp* 1, 1972, 85–113, esp. 102–3, pls. VII–VIII; Durán, *Iconografía* 128–30, no. 31, pl. XVI.

¹² A. Blanco Freijeiro, 'Un nuevo mosaico itálico: el de Neptuno y los pigmeos', *XIII Congreso Nacional de Arqueología*, Huelva 1973 (Zaragoza 1975), 917–21; Durán, *Iconografía* 44–8, no. 4, pl. 11. A coin of Hadrian dated AD 135–7 was found beneath the mosaic, giving a *terminus post quem*.

¹³ J.M. Álvarez Martínez, *Mosaicos romanos de Mérida. Nuevos Hallazgos* (Mérida 1990), 37–49, no. 3, fig. 3, pls. 8–20, suggesting a date in the fourth century.

As this last example shows, black-and-white mosaic, with or without touches of colour, continued to be used into the fourth century: widely for geometric designs, more rarely for figured compositions. A related 'four-colour technique' may also be identified in many geometric designs, where red and ochre are used together with black-and-white in flat tones without any shading. But a fashion for polychromy was also growing, apparently from the late second century onwards; the two techniques, which might be expected to be the speciality of separate workshops, co-exist side by side, sometimes in different rooms of the same house, sometimes within the same pavement. One or more polychrome figured panels are frequently set into an ornamental black-and-white or four-colour surround, more substantial than simply a border. For instance in a mosaic from Italica the basic pattern of stars of lozenges and the filling motifs of the squares between them are in the four colours, black, white, red, and ochre; but the central square contains a fully polychrome bust of Dionysus in slightly finer tesserae¹⁴ (plate 24).

These polychrome figured panels are mostly comparatively small, and figures and setting are usually simplified. A few are more substantial, and one is a real masterpiece, which retains to an astonishing extent the concept of the mosaic as picture. This is the Cosmological Mosaic from the so-called House of the Mithraeum in Emerita (Mérida).¹⁵ Other mosaics in the house have black-and-white ornamental patterns; one is three-coloured; black, white and red, with a polychrome figure of Eros in the centre. But one room off the peristyle contains something quite different (figure 153). Set within wide bands of black-and-white geometric pattern is a huge polychrome panel, rounded at the top; polychrome acanthus clumps fill out the upper corners. It contains a crowded scene of allegorical figures, identified by their Latin names. The allegory is complex, and the large lacuna in the right and centre of the mosaic does not make its interpretation easier. At the top a primordial group presides: *Caelum* (the Heavens), supported by the Pole (*Polum*), with *Saeculum* (Time, Epoch), and, half in the background,

¹⁴ *CMEsp* 11, 26–7, no. 2, pls. 8–10. A date in the middle or third quarter of the second century seems likely.

¹⁵ *CMEsp* 1, 14–17, 35–40, nos. 17 (cosmological mosaic), 18–24 (other mosaics of house); E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 'Mérida revisited: the cosmological mosaic in the light of discussions since 1979', *MM* 34, 1993, 254–74, pls. 45–8, with recent bibliography. See also the works cited below, ns. 16–22.

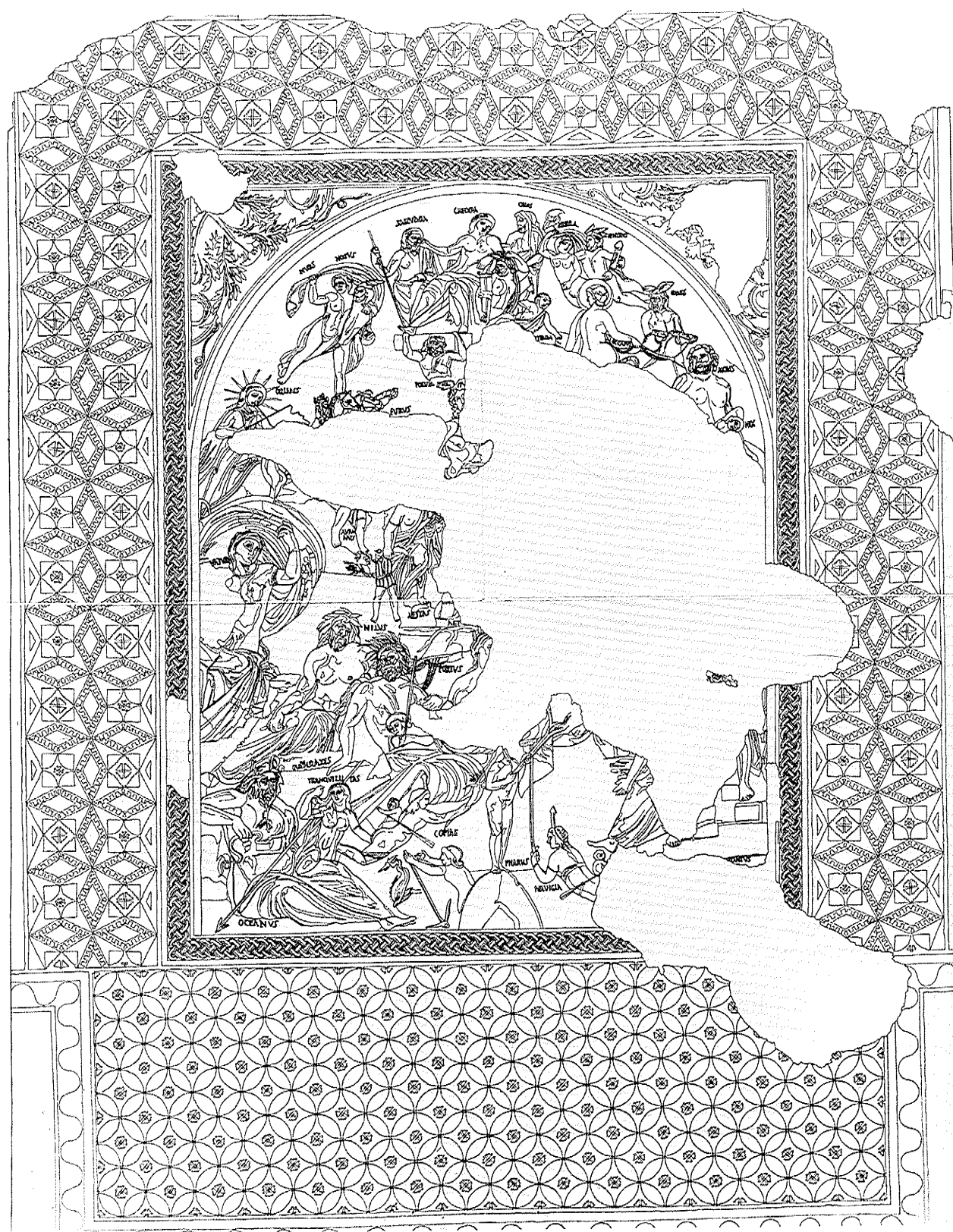


152 Italica, House of Neptune, mosaic of Neptune and pygmies. Maximum dimensions 8.70 m × 7.30 m. Probably mid- to late second century AD.

Chaos (figure 154). Then come figures of the atmosphere, such as the Winds and Clouds (plate 25), the rising Sun and setting Moon (*Oriens* and *Occasus*). Further down are the phenomena of the earth: a huge figure of *Natura* (Nature), a mountain (*Mons*), with Snow as a sleeping woman on his lap. The centre is damaged, but was undoubtedly dominated by a youthful male figure with winged head, to whom the label *Aet[ernitas]* (Eternal Time) is referred by most commentators. Associated with him were the Seasons with their fruits, of whom Summer and Autumn survive; parallels with similar scenes elsewhere show that he probably held the circle of the zodiac, through which they would pass.¹⁶ Finally, down at the bottom come a series of figures associated with water and maritime activities. Among them are Ocean, the river-gods Nile and Euphrates, and female figures labelled *Copiae* (Plenty) and *Navigia* (Shipping), who evoke the figure-heads of ships and are rowed like boats by putti (figure 155). At the bottom centre is a youth with a torch standing on a rock, labelled *Pharus* (lighthouse), beneath the large figure of *Portus*.

The figures are crowded densely together and seen as if in a panoramic view: those at the bottom, often on a large scale, are set against a background of blue glass (with heavy modern restorations in many places), from which rocks emerge to form the middle ground, while the upper

¹⁶ Cf. L. Musso, 'Εἰκὼν τοῦ κόσμου a Mérida: ricerca iconografica per la restituzione del modello compositivo', *RivIstArch* ser. 3, 6–7, 1983–4, 151–90, esp. 161–5, comparing the mosaic from Silin in Tripolitania, above ch. 7, n. 53. The restorations she proposes for some of the missing figures are problematic.



153 Emerita, House of the Mithraeum, Cosmological Mosaic, drawing. 4.04 m × 5.07 m. Probably late second to early third century AD.

figures, smaller and further away, appear against a blue-green sky. The mosaic belongs fully to the pictorial tradition: the multitude of figures move within coherent space, and the figures themselves are freely and naturalistically posed and modelled in a wide range of tones. Mosaics in the eastern Mediterranean in the second and third centuries AD often retain this pictorial approach, but there are few parallels on this scale, and none with a figured scene of such complexity.¹⁷ The execution is fine, nearly though not quite comparable to Hellenistic *vermiculatum*: the tesserae in the figures are between around two and five millimetres square. Glass is used very extensively to provide colours not otherwise available, especially the wide range of blues and greens of sea and sky. Gold-glass may also have been used for some details, though this is disputed. Otherwise the materials are mostly local limestone and quartzites, and some Spanish marble. There is no clear archaeological evidence for the date; most scholars have placed it on grounds of style and content in the late Antonine period, while Lancha opts for the third century.¹⁸

Not surprisingly several aspects of the cosmological mosaic have provoked controversy: its precise significance, its origins, and the reasons for its presence here in the house. Some scholars have associated it with a group of Mithraic monuments found nearby (although not in the house itself);¹⁹ but most see the underlying concepts as belonging in a wider religious and philosophical world than that of the cult of Mithras, to which there is no direct allusion in the mosaic. Alföldi sees it as the copy of a Hellenistic painting evoking the dawning of the Golden Age of peace and plenty under the guidance of the cosmic powers; he ascribes the original to Ptolemaic Alexandria,

¹⁷ Cf. below, ch.10, section II, esp. n.16.

¹⁸ J. Lancha, 'La mosaïque cosmologique de Mérida, étude technique et stylistique (I)', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 19.1, 1983, 17–68; E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, 'Technische und stilistische Beobachtung zum kosmologischen Mosaik von Mérida und seine Umrahmung', in A. Alföldi et al., *Aion in Mérida und Aphrodisias (Madriider Beiträge 6, Mainz am Rhein 1979)*, 26–34. For the use of gold-glass tesserae, see Lancha, *ibid.* 27, 34, *contra* Alföldi-Rosenbaum, *ibid.* 29; Alföldi-Rosenbaum, *MM* 34, 1993, 257. For the date, see Lancha, *ibid.* 52–3, who rules out the fourth century on the basis of the palaeography of the inscriptions and the technical qualities of the glass tesserae, but does not clearly justify her own preference for the third century rather than the second half of the second.

¹⁹ A. Blanco Freijeiro, 'El mosaico de Mérida con la alegoría del Saeculum Aureum', *Estudios sobre el mundo helenístico* (Seville 1971), 153–78; J.M. Blázquez, 'Cosmología mitraica en un mosaico de Augusta Emerita', *ArchEspArq* 59, 1986, 89–100.



154 Emerita, Cosmological Mosaic, detail of top, with celestial deities (*Sacculum, Caelum, Chaos*).



155 Emerita, Cosmological Mosaic, detail of left side, with personifications of water (Nile and Euphrates, Ocean) and maritime activities (*Copiae*).

to which the personified port next to its famous lighthouse would refer. The labels indicate a Greek original, translated into a Latin which occasionally does not fit the figures; for instance, the feminine form *Aet[ernitas]* is apparently applied to a male personification: the Greek equivalent, *Aion*, is masculine.²⁰ Musso too accepts the model as Alexandrian in origin, celebrating that city as guardian of the cosmic order.²¹ Quet, on the other hand, places it in the context of the philosophico-religious speculations of intellectual circles (predominantly Greek-speaking) of the mid- to late second century AD, and sees as one of its central themes the glorification of Rome (to whom she less convincingly refers the figure of *Portus*) and the prosperity of the world under Roman rule.²² With either explanation, its presence in this house in Emerita remains puzzling. The room is of uncertain function, and may well have been rather dark; the mosaic was set to face the back, with only a panel 2.10 m wide from which it could be seen; the complexities of the allegory can hardly have been easy to appreciate.

What is certain is that the work is unique in Spain, both in iconography and in style. The differences between this mosaic and the typical production of the Spanish mosaic workshops up to this point leave no doubt, to my mind, that it must be the work of an immigrant artist; equally certainly he must have come from the eastern Mediterranean, most likely from Syria, where large picture-mosaics of this sort were being produced in the second and third centuries. On the other hand, it was undoubtedly laid on the spot, with local materials; and the border pattern attests to the presence of a normal Emeritan workshop. This gives a glimpse of the manner in which the working habits and styles of the Spanish mosaicists came to be changed: craftsmen trained with such a master will have continued to execute figured work in polychromy, but without the full expertise in the pictorial tradition which he had brought from his homeland.

At much the same time many Spanish workshops were adopting another fashion, for completely polychrome designs where the floor is divided into compartments outlined by often elaborate borders and containing a

variety of figured or ornamental motifs. Craftsmen from Gaul may have helped to introduce this style, well attested in many parts of Gaul by the late second century; it has parallels also in northern Italy. One site where it appears to have established itself firmly is Italica, where a number of mosaics probably to be dated to the second and early third centuries show this style of composition. In the House of the Planetarium, from the mid-second century, a guilloche grid divides one floor into a series of small panels containing Dionysiac figures. In another room a circle of guilloche contains seven hexagons, also outlined in guilloche, with busts of the planetary deities set in medallions of laurel wreath; delicate vegetal patterns fill the rest of the room (figure 156). Both floors are fully polychrome.²³

In the far west of Lusitania, in modern Portugal, a number of houses in the town of Conimbriga were decorated with mosaics. One, the House of the Fountains (Casa dos Repuxos), has been published in detail. It was a large and very luxurious house, which gets its modern name from the numerous fountains that played in the basin of its central peristyle. It undoubtedly underwent several phases of alteration and decoration, but the main phase, to which most of the mosaics are ascribed, is thought to belong at the end of the second or early third century²⁴ (figure 157a). Almost all are polychrome; many of the geometric designs use only three or four colours (usually yellow and red in addition to black and white), but more are added in figured or vegetal designs or when richer effects are desired. Figured scenes play a comparatively minor role in the overall decorative scheme, placed in small panels at the corners of the peristyle or at the centre of larger rooms. They include traditional mythological scenes such as Perseus with the Gorgon's head or Actaeon attacked by his hounds, as well as scenes of contemporary activities such as hunting. The patron was presumably proud to display his familiarity with classical culture, as well as his wealth and hospitality. However the rather minimalist form adopted for most of the figured scenes (Perseus, for instance, appears without Andromeda) suggests that the mosaicists may not have



156 Italica, House of the Planetarium, mosaic with busts of the planetary deities. 4.85 m × 6.70 m. Mid-second century AD.

been accustomed to handling complex scenes of this sort. Their strong point lay in decorative designs, geometric or vegetal, and it is these that give the mosaics of the house their very individual character. The basic designs and motifs are for the most part widespread throughout the western empire; their treatment is idiosyncratic. Individual motifs are often rendered with areas of unbroken colour with strong chromatic contrasts, while other elements, especially some of the very stylised vegetal motifs, are rendered in outline. The great *triclinium* on the main axis of the peristyle is particularly characteristic²⁵ (figure 157b). The front part of the room has borders with repeating geometric designs surrounding a main carpet with a pattern, basically simple, of rosettes in octagons; the space around the rosettes is filled with linear motifs which produce an effect like filigree. At the centre is a panel with a design of vegetal wreaths containing birds and vases; the spaces between the wreaths have a red background, against which more birds stand out in white. In the inner part of the room, between the area reserved for the couches, the design of this panel is repeated with slight variations, within a stylised vegetal border. All available space is crowded with ornament, emphasising the alternation of line and colour.

These mosaics at Conimbriga are evidently the products of a local workshop. It had received the repertory of designs current in more central parts of the empire, but evolved its own manner of treating them. Until more material from this region and of the same period is published and studied, it is impossible to gauge the extent of its peculiarities and its relationship to other centres. Its existence and the degree of skill which it shows in its best work reflect the demand from the wealthy in this remote region for the fitting embellishment of their dwellings. It is striking, however, that the numerous repairs which can be seen in the pavements, especially of the peristyle, indicate that this standard could not be maintained. Some patches imitate the original design with much less skill, others abandon it for a frankly incompetent hodgepodge. The later inhabitants of the house appear to have been satisfied with a standard of execution which would presumably have appalled their forerunners: perhaps they could afford no better, perhaps the craftsmen simply were not there to serve them better.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 110–16, no. 10, pls. 39–43.

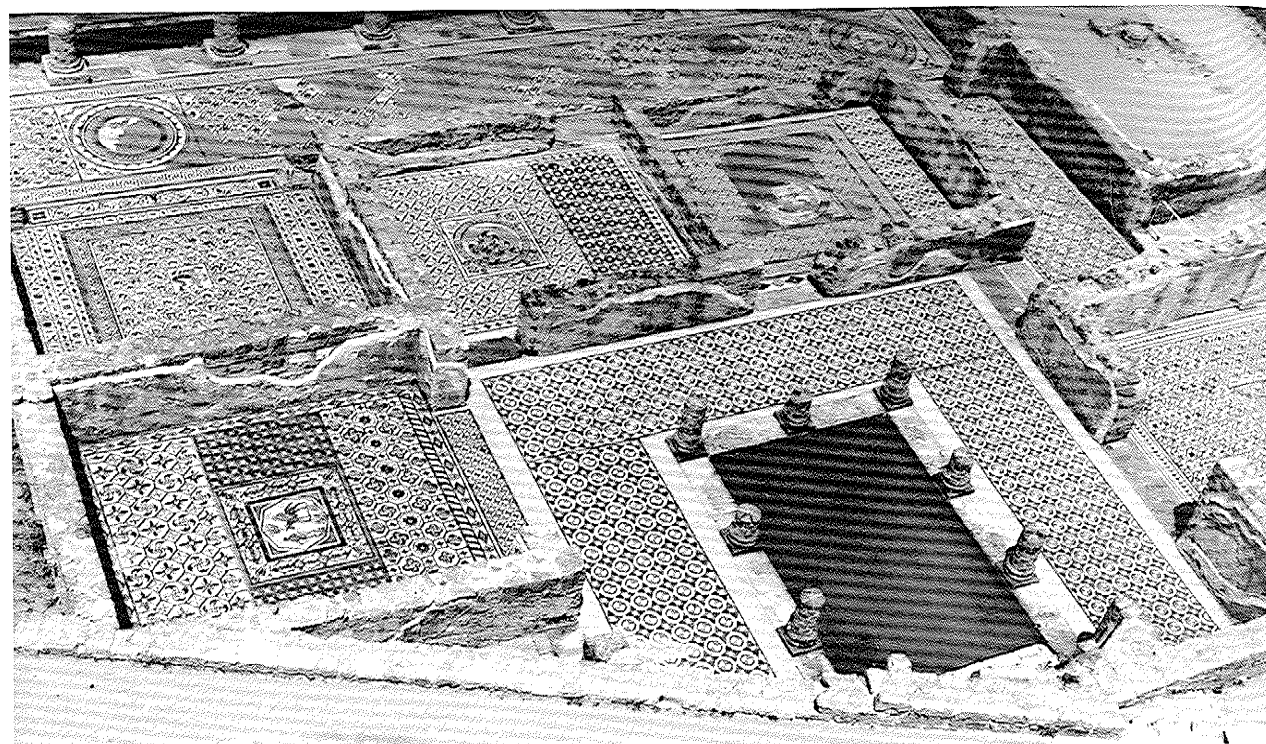
²⁰ Alföldi, *Aion* (cit. n. 18), 1–12.

²¹ *Cit.* n. 16.

²² M.-H. Quet, *La mosaïque cosmologique de Mérida. Propositions de lecture* (Paris 1981), 23: 'un hymne au *Cosmos* sous l'Empire de Rome'.

²³ Durán, *Iconografía*, 73–8, nos. 13–14, pls. VII–IX. For the general characteristics of the Italica mosaics see *ibid.*, 25–82; *CMEsp* 11, 18–20.

²⁴ J.M. Bairoiro Oleiro, *Conimbriga. Casa dos Repuxos (Corpus dos Mosaicos Romanos de Portugal. Conventus Scallabitanus 1, Conimbriga 1992)*. The house was partially destroyed by the construction of the city wall at (probably) the end of the third–beginning of the fourth century; several of the mosaics, including large portions of two wings of the peristyle, had been extensively repaired or relaid before that date.



157a Conimbriga, House of the Fountains, view of rooms around small peristyle. Probably late second to early third century AD.

II

The great age of mosaic production in the Iberian peninsula was the later third and especially the fourth century AD. Black-and-white pavements continued to be made, as did designs in limited polychromy of three or four colours. But for grander commissions with more lavish effects polychromy was normal, both for ornamental designs and for figures. To the various elements – Italian, Eastern, possibly Gallic – which had contributed to the creation of the Iberian schools must now be added the influence of the North African mosaics, unmistakably visible in some ornamental schemes adopted in the peninsula. A revived current of eastern influence may also be visible, for instance in the complex patterns of interlace popular in the later fourth and fifth centuries.²⁶ Yet the Spanish workshops were by no means purely derivative. Their work belongs in the general *koine* of the western Mediterranean in the later Empire, but retains features peculiar to themselves.

²⁶ Cf. Fernández-Galiano, *CMGR* 111, 419–28.

²⁷ *CMEsp* 11; J.M. Álvarez Martínez, *Mosaicos Romanos de Mérida. Nuevos Hallazgos* (Mérida 1990); M. Guardia Pons, *Los Mosaicos de la Antigüedad tardía en Hispania. Estudios de Iconografía* (Barcelona 1992), 191–225, 442–4.

²⁸ D. Fernández-Galiano, *Complutum* 1, *Excavaciones* (Madrid 1984), 129–60; 11, *Mosaicos*, 113–86.

In several of the towns mosaics were produced without interruption into the late Empire. Emerita was probably the leading manufacturer; in addition to more traditional designs, its products include several scenes of the circus and of hunting, and an unusual representation of the Seven Sages, their names given in Greek.²⁷ A series of richly decorated houses from this period has been excavated in Complutum (Alcalá de Henares); the most interesting is the House of Bacchus, from the late fourth or early fifth century (figure 158). One room is laid out in the traditional manner as a *triclinium*, with a simple pattern covering the space for the couches on three sides. The central panels show the drunken Dionysus and his followers, vintagers treading the grapes, and leopards drinking from *craters*; busts of the Seasons were placed at the entrance. These scenes are all traditional, as is the use of the mosaic to indicate the lay-out of the dining-room, somewhat old-fashioned at this date. But in the corridor leading to this room the mosaicists exercised their inventiveness in adapting the floor to accommodate the social requirements of the owner, with a mosaic which shows six servants offering cups of wine to the approaching guests (figure 159). The figure-style is lively but crude, with linear rendering of the figures and inorganic anatomy, in the traditional Dionysus as well as the contemporary figures of the servants.²⁸

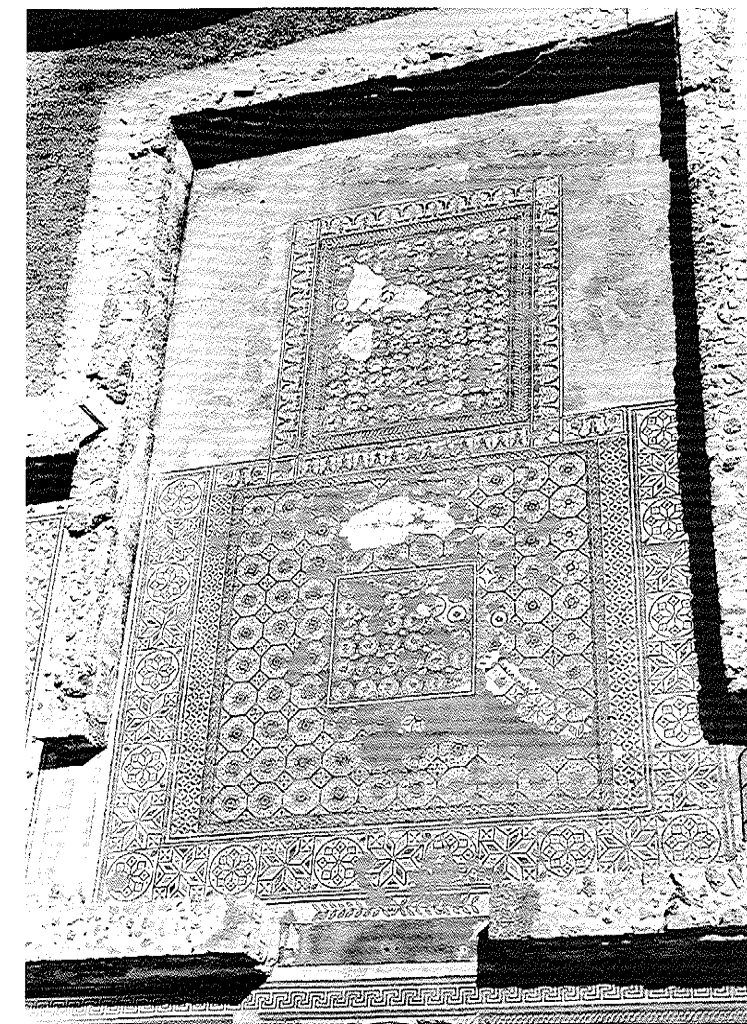
The most outstanding finds have been made in the

villas of the countryside, where the Hispanic aristocracy were constructing and decorating extraordinarily lavish dwellings all through the fourth and at least into the fifth century AD.²⁹ Among the grandest is that of La Olmeda at Pedrosa de la Vega, near Palantia (Palencia), in the northern part of Tarraconensis.³⁰ The residential sector of the villa (the only area excavated to date) is a huge square structure with central peristyle and towers at the angles. It is built mainly of brick and mud-brick in an area where stone is in short supply; the materials for the mosaics must have been laboriously transported from a considerable distance. Carpets of polychrome mosaic cover the porticoes of the peristyle and the main public rooms of the villa, more than fifteen in all. All but one are ornamental, with elaborate geometric and floral designs. Some use motifs that can be closely paralleled in the North African repertory: interlacing bands of laurel garland and of guilloche, and wavy ribbons enclosing lotus flowers, in a range of reds, yellows and greens. Others have characteristics which seem more exclusively Hispanic: repetitive patterns, in which colour is used in the various motifs without gradations, so that the effect comes from contrasting areas of colour, mostly red and yellow, sometimes against a black ground; the motifs are sometimes outlined in white (plate 26). It looks as though two different workshops may have been involved, one responsible for the main reception rooms, the other for the rest.

Figured mosaics occur only in the principal reception room (1) of the villa. A rich ornamental carpet here surrounds two large figured panels. The smaller, closer to the door, is a hunting scene (figure 160). Hunters on foot and on horseback are attacking leopards, tigress, and bear; hounds confront a huge boar; one lion is wounded, another is chasing antelopes. Rocky outcrops and trees scattered against the white ground indicate the landscape. They form a series of unrelated scenes, full of lively activity; both in the selection of episodes and in composition it is very close to African prototypes, or to the hunting scenes at Piazza Armerina or Tellaro in Sicily.³¹ The main mosaic of the room is quite different, and much more original (figure 161; plates 27, 28). A big panel is framed by an

²⁹ For the villas themselves, see J.-G. Gorges, *Les Villas hispano-romaines. Inventaire et problématique archéologiques* (Paris 1979), esp. 153–62, with full bibliographies; M.C. Fernández Castro, *Villas romanas en España* (Madrid 1982).

³⁰ P. de Palol, J. Cortes, *La villa romana de La Olmeda, Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia). Excavaciones de 1969 y 1970*, 1 (Madrid 1974); P. de Palol, *La villa romana de La Olmeda de Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia). Guía de las excavaciones*⁴ (Palencia 1990).

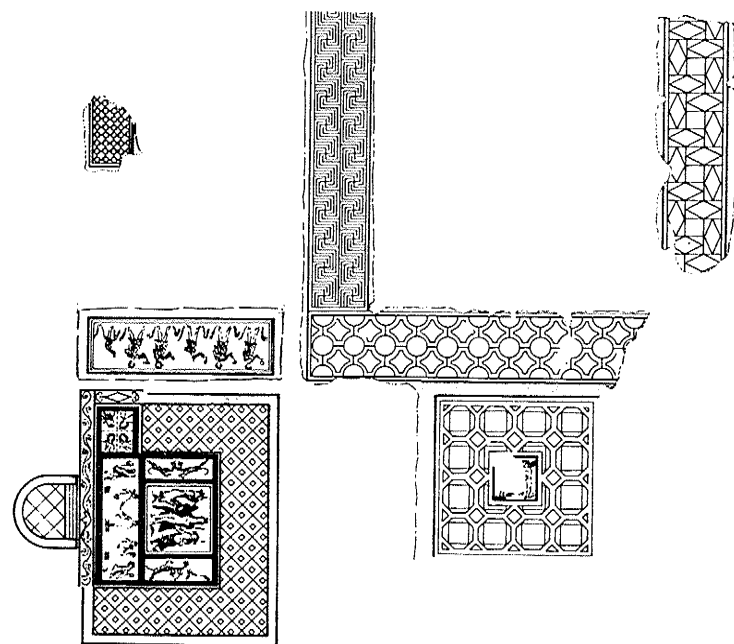


157b Conimbriga, House of the Fountains, *triclinium*, mosaic 10.

extraordinary border with pairs of confronted ducks whose tails turn into dolphins. Between these hang medallions with portraits, male and female, rendered with great character and realism. Busts of the Seasons grow from acanthus clumps in the corners, while beribboned amphoras and stylised vegetal motifs fill the remaining spaces; an astonishingly whimsical and baroque exuberance of ornament.³² Within this is the scene of Achilles on Skyros. Here, in contrast to the hunting panel, there is a single unified episode. Achilles in the centre seizes the weapons at the sound of the trumpet blown by a soldier in the top right

³¹ De Palol, Cortes, *ibid.*, 55–61, 82–6; J.M. Blázquez, G. López Monteagudo, 'Iconografía de la vida cotidiana: temas de caza', *Homenaje Balil*, 76–9; cf. ch.7, ns.33, 41; ch.8, ns.12, 13, 24.

³² De Palol, Cortes, *ibid.*, 42–55, 81–2; J. Lancha, 'Le rinceau aux médaillons de la mosaïque d'Achille (Pedrosa de la Vega): essai d'interprétation', in *Mosaicos Romanos* 169–80.



158 Complutum, House of Bacchus, plan of mosaics. Late fourth to early fifth century AD.

corner, while the daughters of Lykomedes vainly try to restrain him. A columned and curtained doorway, in which the dignified figure of Lykomedes' wife stands framed, sets the scene in the women's quarters, and a strip of ground in the foreground is strewn with discarded wool baskets, spindles, and other items of feminine work. Although the figures are arranged in depth, the treatment of space is ambiguous; thus the lower parts of some of the background figures are not represented, and except at the bottom of the panel the ground is neutral white, set ornamentally to form imbrication designs.³³ The figures are over life-size, and the women especially are of very elongated proportions, emphasised by the long folds of their drapery; in a normal oblique view of the mosaic this would be yet more striking. The musculature of the men is strongly modelled (though the anatomy is not always strictly correct), and there is a tendency to emphasise rounded parts of the body by setting the tesserae in curving worklines. In the faces this practice is combined with long straight noses and firmly outlined almond eyes and brows,

which help to give the mosaic its very individual, rather mannered character. The technique is skilful, with small tesserae in the figures, especially in the faces, very densely set. There are strong colour contrasts with reds, ochres, and lilac-grey the prevailing tones; glass is used for brilliant colours, mainly blue and green. Above all, there is a theatricality about it, especially apparent in the vehement gestures and exaggerated poses of Achilles and the soldier with the trumpet. The aim is not simply to tell a narrative, but to compose a scene of dramatic spectacle: a reminder that in late antiquity one of the principal means through which myth was purveyed was the pantomime, a ballet-like performance with great emphasis upon spectacle. The scene is related to other versions of the same theme (common in Roman art in a wide variety of media), but is not identical with any; this is a free composition on the basis of well-known motifs, not an exact reproduction.³⁴

The archaeological evidence indicates that the villa was built no earlier than the second quarter of the fourth century AD; a coin of Constantine dated AD 324–5 embedded in the foundations of the mosaic provides a *terminus post quem*. Most commentators have placed the mosaics somewhat later, towards the end of the fourth century; the elegant, mannered style of the Achilles panel recalls the sculpture of the Theodosian age, and the hairstyles of the female figures also belong in this period.³⁵ The contrast between it and the hunting panel is remarkable, and suggests a different designer or the use of cartoons of different origins. Where the mosaicists came from is not clear; a handful of other mosaics in the same general region, in villas at Dueñas (Palencia) and Quintana del Marco (León), share some stylistic and technical characteristics, though none is of such exceptional quality.³⁶

There was a widespread taste in the Iberian provinces during the later Empire for mosaics illustrating mythological subjects, including some that are quite rare; the compositional scheme chosen was often the single big picture panel occupying the greater part of the floor.³⁷

see below, ch.18, ns.46–7.

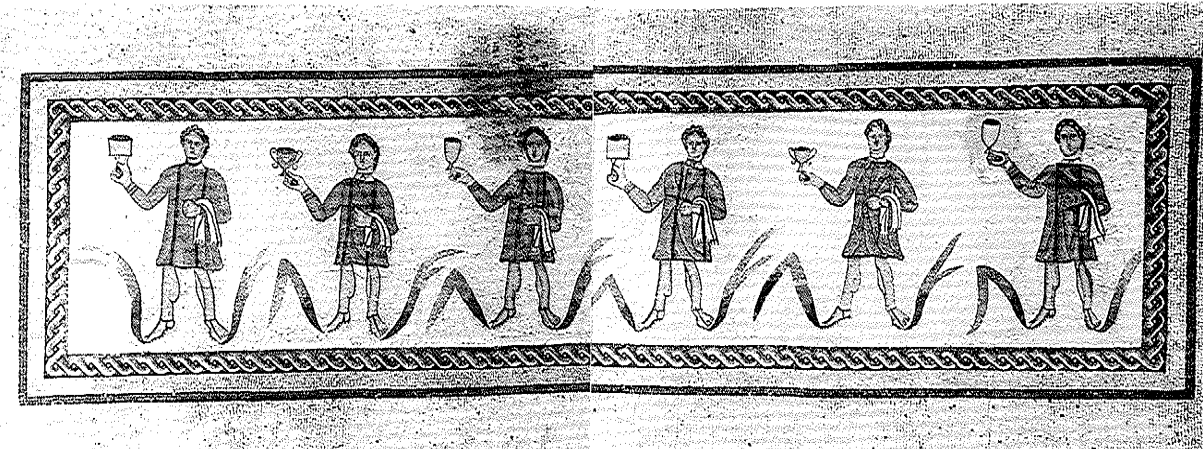
³⁵ De Palol, Cortes, *ibid.*, 28–9, 203–7.

³⁶ P. de Palol, 'Das Okeanos-Mosaik in der römischen Villa zu Dueñas', *MM* 8, 1967, 196–225; *CMEsp* x, 14, 33–6 (Quintana del Marco).

³⁷ For an excellent recently published example, see the villa of La Malena at Azuara (Zaragoza): J.I. Royo Guillén, 'La villa tardorromana de "La Malena" en Azuara y el mosaico de la Bodas de Cadmo y Harmonia', *JRA* 5, 1992, 148–61; D. Fernández-Galiano Ruiz, 'Cadmo y Harmonia: imagen, mito y arqueología', *ibid.*, 162–77, and colour figs.6–34.

³³ De Palol, Cortes, *ibid.*, 79–80. This way of treating the ground is attested in many parts of the empire, from the first to the sixth centuries AD; it is more common in the later periods, and especially in the eastern Mediterranean. In Spain most of the parallels belong to the late Empire; cf. X. Barral i Altet, 'Un mosaico romano monocromo de Cardedeu (Barcelona)', *XIII Congreso Nacional de Arqueología, Huelva* 1973 (Zaragoza 1975), 929–32.

³⁴ De Palol, Cortes, *ibid.*, 37–42, 69–81; de Palol, 'Los dos mosaicos hispánicos de Aquiles: el de Pedrosa de la Vega y el de Santisteban del Puerto', *CMGR* II, 227–37, pls.LXXXV–LXXXIX. For the theme cf. *LIMC* I (1981), 58–65, s.v. Achilleus IIc (A. Kossatz-Deissmann), and



159 Complutum, House of Bacchus, corridor with servants offering drinks. 6.50 m × 2.43 m.

Another very luxurious villa illustrates this taste, that at Carranque (Toledo).³⁸ Excavations here are not yet complete, but have revealed a series of structures including a colossal basilica with wall and floor decoration of mosaic and *opus sectile* using expensive imported marbles and porphyry. The main residential building contained two big mythological figured panels, set in the centre of polychrome geometric carpets, in what are clearly the main reception rooms. One shows a nude hunter fighting a boar: the presence of Mars and Venus watching at one side suggests an identification as the death of Adonis, although other features such as the hounds with their names inscribed beside them recall contemporary, non-heroic hunting scenes. The second, a panel c.2 m square in the centre of a room of unusual quadrilobed plan, represents Achilles and Briseis. A semi-circular basin in the peristyle immediately opposite the entrance to this room contains a head of Ocean among fish and sea-creatures, his hair and beard forming a blue cascade of watery ripples (figure 162). Further mythological scenes decorated a room identified by an inscription as a *cubiculum*.³⁹ The floor here was composed, following a common scheme, of a central circle and semi-circles along the sides. The central medallion shows a nimbed female figure, probably an allegory such as *Felicitas* (Happiness); in the semi-circles are mythological scenes, chosen for their common themes of love and metamorphosis: Diana and Actaeon, Hylas and the Nymphs, Pyramus and Thisbe (unique to date in the western empire, though there are examples in the east), and probably Neptune in the form of a horse, approaching Amythone.

³⁸ D. Fernández-Galiano, 'La villa de Materno', in *Mosaicos Romanos* 255–69; Fernández-Galiano, 'The villa of Maternus at Carranque', *CMGR* v, 199–210.

³⁹ J. Arce, 'El mosaico de "las metamorfosis" de Carranque (Toledo)', *MM* 27, 1986, 365–74, pls.67–72.

Inscriptions on two of the mosaics contain the signatures of two different mosaic workshops, one in the *cubiculum* with the metamorphosis scenes (which also conveys a greeting to Maternus, presumably the owner of the villa), the other in the room with Achilles and Briseis.⁴⁰ The figure-style in the two rooms is indeed very different: lively but anatomically somewhat crude in the metamorphosis mosaic, simpler and more classical in that of Achilles. Moreover, the scene of Adonis and the boar may almost certainly be ascribed to the same workshop as the metamorphosis scenes, the very striking head of Ocean to that of Achilles. The documented presence of two workshops in the same house is of great interest; there is no sign that one group of mosaics is a later addition (the life of the house appears to have been fairly short), so the two workshops appear to have been operating more or less simultaneously. Once again the secondary rooms and areas were lavishly decorated with ornamental mosaics; alongside the usual elaborate geometric designs, there are also some whose effect depends upon contrasting areas of unbroken colour. The construction date of the villa appears to be the second half of the fourth century; even on the basis of what is known to date, it is clear that its owners must have been of unusual wealth and social standing.⁴¹

In the fifth century Hispania was shaken by a succession of barbarian invasions and conquests between 409 and 475: Vandals, Suebi, and Visigoths. This did not mean the immediate end of Roman-style life throughout the provinces, and many of the great villas continued to be inhabited without major disturbance throughout that

⁴⁰ Below, ch.16, n.19.

⁴¹ Fernández-Galiano, 'La villa de Materno' (cit.n.38) suggests an identification with Maternus Cynegius, a prominent minister (and possibly a relative) of the emperor Theodosius; this is questioned by an anonymous referee, quoted in *CMGR* v, 210.



160 Pedrosa de la Vega, Villa de la Olmeda, room 1, Hunting Scene. 5 m × 2 m. Late fourth century AD.



161 Pedrosa de la Vega, Villa de la Olmeda, room 1, Achilles on Skyros. Central panel 3.75 m × 4.70 m. Late fourth century AD.



162 Carranque, villa, basin with head of Ocean. Probably second half of the fourth century AD.



163 Emerita, mosaic of Dionysus and Ariadne, with signature of workshop of Anniponus. Museo Nacional de Arte Romano 559/27, Mérida. 2.17 m × 1.80 m. Probably late fourth to fifth century AD.

century. Some new mosaics, as well as repairs to earlier ones, are probably to be ascribed to the fifth century, although secure dates are mostly lacking. But there are also signs which suggest the disintegration of the old culture. Although geometric mosaics continued to be proficiently laid, there are examples of mythological scenes probably to be dated to this period, which show a collapse of the figurative traditions and the skills to execute them. Among them is one from Santisteban del Puerto (Jaén), executed in black and white with some details in red.⁴² Two big panels (a third is largely destroyed) show the scenes of Apollo and Marsyas and Achilles on Skyros, with shapeless, primitive-looking figures, executed in a mixture of pure outline, pure sil-

⁴² De Palol, *CMGR* II, 237–40, pls.xc–xcii; *CMEsp* III, 66–72, no.51, pls.59, 91. There is no archaeological context; it is clearly dangerous to allot a date purely on the basis of the 'decadence' of the style, but the palaeography of the inscription suggests the late fourth to fifth century.

houette, and the two combined. In the scene of Achilles an inscription attempts to explain the story to the onlooker (Achilles, who took the name of Pyrrha in his feminine disguise, is labelled *Pyrra filius Tetidis*, 'Pyrra the son of Thetis'); but the mythological knowledge it tries to display is confused. Another from Emerita with Dionysus discovering the sleeping Ariadne retains elements of the traditional iconography, but the style shows the disintegration of classical forms, while ornamental motifs such as circles and disks are scattered at random. It bears, however, a signature identifying it as the product of the workshop of Anniponus, *ex officina Anniponi*: the implication is that its makers were proud of it⁴³ (figure 163). These mosaics show that there was still a desire for tradi-

⁴³ *CMEsp* I, 21–2, 34, no.15, pls.26–7. A *terminus post quem* is given by a coin of Constantius II (324–61); there is no evidence for the lower limit, but Blanco suggests a date around AD 400 (*ibid.*). For the signature, see ch.16, n.17.

tional mythological scenes and that attempts were made to explain them, but that they had ceased to be part of the living culture either of the craftsmen who executed them or of the patrons who accepted such garbled versions.

Bibliography

Ten volumes of *CMEsp* have been published between 1978 and 1993, the first two by A. Blanco Freijeiro, the rest by

J.M. Blázquez and various collaborators. A separate project is devoted to the mosaics of the modern region of Catalonia: one volume has appeared covering the mosaics of Barcelona (X. Barral i Altet, 1978). A Corpus of the mosaics of Portugal is also in progress; one volume, on the Casa dos Repuxos at Conimbriga, has been published, with superb illustrations (J.M. Bairrão Oleiro, 1992). Synthetic studies are given by Duran, *Iconografía*; M. Guardia Pons, *Los Mosaicos de la Antigüedad tardía en Hispania. Estudios de Iconografía* (Barcelona 1992).

Syria and the east

I

The Roman province of Syria, one of the richest and most important of the empire, covered much of the area of the Near East, from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates and the desert. Rome in this region was the successor of the great Hellenistic kingdoms, which in turn were superimposed upon much older civilisations. Greek was the dominant language, at least of government and the educated classes; Syriac and other Semitic languages were used by the majority of the population. In art and architecture too the dominant influence was Hellenistic, though local traditions exerted an influence whose strength varied in different regions and circumstances. In mosaic, where there was no indigenous tradition, the Hellenistic influence was overwhelming; only in a few rare instances can local characteristics be identified. Even rarer are the signs of any specifically western or Italian influence, although much of the repertory in use, especially the geometric, circulated throughout the empire and may well have emanated in the first place from Italian workshops.

The main focus of this chapter is the more northerly part of Syria, centred on the capital, Antioch-on-the-Orontes (modern Antakya, now in Turkey). The southern part of the region, comprising Roman Palestine and the area east of the Jordan, Roman Arabia, will be considered separately in chapter 11, in order to give full weight to the effects of its peculiar religious history. Some account is also taken in this chapter of regions which lay on the eastern fringes of the empire, such as the client kingdom, later the province, of Osroene east of the Euphrates, and even of the occasional appearance of mosaics right outside the boundaries of the empire, where Graeco-Roman components had to serve the needs of an alien culture.¹

¹ For the complex history of the region and the changing political boundaries see F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC-AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass. 1993).

² Tarsos: Salzmann 37, 113 no.125. Palestine: below, ch.11, ns.1-3.

³ Levi AMP. Levi's chronology has not been reexamined in detail, but most recent discussions have been inclined to accept its broad outlines: cf. Balty, *Proche-Orient* 13-14; Balty, *ANRW* 348-53. The partial

Few archaeological monuments survive from the Hellenistic period, despite the importance of Syria at that time; the Hellenistic cities have for the most part vanished beneath their Roman successors. It is not therefore surprising that very few mosaics have been found dating from the Hellenistic period, or even from before c.AD 100. A few traces show that the art was indeed known in this general region at an earlier date. In neighbouring Cilicia a pebble mosaic from Tarsos is dated to the late third or beginning of the second century BC; and mosaics are attested in Palestine from the late second century and first centuries BC.²

However there is very little evidence for the art of mosaic in Syria until the beginning of the long series of mosaics from Antioch-on-the-Orontes, foremost city of Syria and one of greatest metropolises of the whole Roman Empire. The excavations by Princeton University in the 1930s in Antioch itself and its suburbs Daphne and Seleucia revealed a large number of private houses and other buildings (baths, tombs, churches) paved with mosaic: the excavation reports list 180 separate pavements, but many geometric mosaics are omitted from this total. The earliest are placed before the earthquake which destroyed Antioch in AD 115, the latest between another earthquake of AD 526 and the Persian sack of the city in AD 540, giving a continuous development of more than four centuries. Their detailed publication by Doro Levi in 1947 remains one of the cornerstones of the study of ancient mosaics. Subsequent discoveries, among them those from the Belgian excavations at nearby Apamea-on-the-Orontes, have amplified the picture presented by the Antioch mosaics and filled in some gaps, but not fundamentally altered it.³

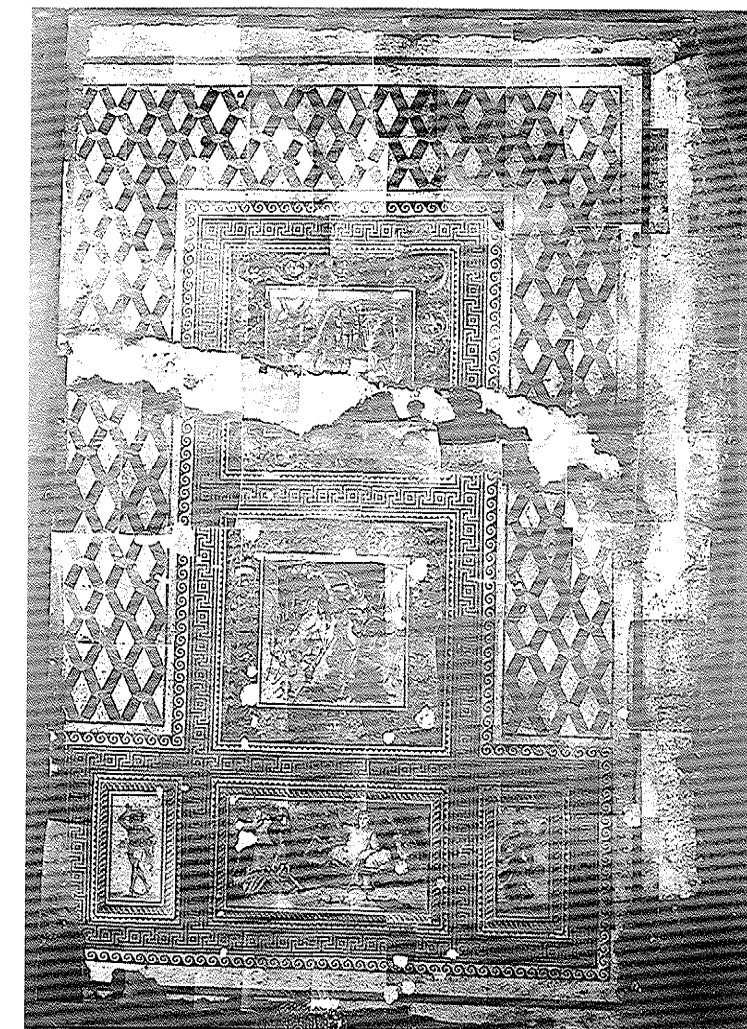
At the opening of the Antioch series are placed the

republication of the mosaics from Antioch itself by S. Campbell, *The Mosaics of Antioch* (*Subsidia Mediaevalia* 15, *Corpus of Mosaic Pavements in Turkey*, Toronto 1988), aims to make clearer the distinction between dates based on archaeological context and those proposed only on the basis of style; but see reviews by F. Baratte, *Gnomon* 62, 1990, 665-6; J. Balty, *BjB* 190, 1990, 718-20; K. Dunbabin, *JRA* 2, 1989, 313-14.

mosaics from the so-called Atrium House, thought either to have been destroyed in the earthquake of AD 115, or to belong to a reconstruction caused by that earthquake; Augustan material found beneath it provides a *terminus post quem*.⁴ The mosaics decorated a *triclinium*; an ornamental band occupied the space for the couches on three sides, around a T-shaped area (figure 164). This contained five separate figured panels within a continuous border of meander and waves; two panels had individual borders of scrolls, the others of guilloche. Geometric and figured decoration throughout are polychrome. The panels are conceived as independent pictures, although they are not separately made *emblemata*. In the bar of the T a panel showing the Drinking Contest between Dionysus and Heracles faced the entrance of the room, between two smaller panels with a satyr and a maenad (figure 165). In the shaft of the T a panel with the Judgement of Paris (figure 166) and a damaged one showing Aphrodite and Adonis faced the back of the room, where the most honoured guests would recline. The plan of the room reflects fashions originating from Rome (Greek dining-rooms had a different shape); in all other respects, the mosaics continue Hellenistic traditions.

The scenes are conceived as pictures, with naturalistically rendered figures in a spatial setting. In the scene of the Judgement of Paris, Paris sits in a rocky landscape in front of a sacred tree and column similar to those found in Pompeian landscape paintings of the type known as *sacro-idyllic*. The three goddesses are grouped on a ledge of rock to the right, Hermes stands to the left; tiny figures of Eros and Psyche appear on a column and a rocky base in the background. Only the diminutive figures of Paris' flocks, represented on a much smaller scale, break the realistic illusion. The poses of the figures are naturalistic, and fine gradations of colour are used to model the flesh parts and the drapery; a detail such as the feathery rendering of the foliage of the tree indicates the close dependence upon painting. The technique approximates to *vermiculatum*, with tesserae as small as one to three millimetres in the figures, about five millimetres in the ground. There is a very wide range of colours, mostly of limestone and marble, with blue and green glass for details. Around the panel is a frame composed of a rich garland of vine and ivy scrolls on a black ground; two

⁴ Levi AMP 15-25, pls. I-IIA, CXLIIA, CXLV-VIII; Baratte, *Louvre* 87-92 no.43, figs.83-5; Campbell, *ibid.*, 19-22, IVA7, pls.68-74. Levi believes that the preceding building may have been destroyed in an earthquake under Caligula, and places the mosaic before the earthquake



164 Antioch, Atrium House, *triclinium*. 4.80 m × 7.20 m. c. AD 100 or first half of the second century AD.

heads occupy the centre of the sides, and birds and insects enliven the scrolls. Again detail and colouring are naturalistic, with delicate effects of lighting on the leaves against the dark ground.

The principal characteristics of the mosaics of the second and early third centuries AD at Antioch are already embodied in those of the Atrium House. Geometric ornament is at first comparatively simple, while figured scenes are prominent in rooms or spaces of any pretensions. Most are comparatively small (usually well under two metres square), but they are not separate *emblemata*, of which only one house at Antioch contained clearly identifiable examples.⁵ Several such panels may be combined in a single pavement, often with different orientation to provide multiple viewing points within the room.

of AD 115; Baratte places it between 115 and the mid-second century. In the absence of securely dated comparative material of this period from the region, the question can hardly be decided.

⁵ House of Polyphemus and Galatea: Levi AMP 25-8.



165 Antioch, Atrium House, *triclinium*, Drinking Contest of Dionysus and Heracles. Worcester Art Museum no.1933.36.

The subjects are mostly derived from traditional mythology; a literary tinge is often apparent in the selection, and leads to the illustration of rare subjects such as the novels of Ninos and Semiramis and of Metiochos and Parthenope.⁶ Many of the scenes are clearly derived from or inspired by paintings, and adopt the traditional 'window-in-the-floor' approach, with figures in landscape or architectural settings. These show an increasing taste for strong three-dimensional effects, which reaches a climax in the Severan period with figures set amid *trompe l'œil* architectural elements reminiscent of the theatre. The taste is well illustrated by the mosaic of the Drinking Contest of Dionysus and Heracles (the same subject as in the Atrium House) from the House of the Drinking Contest, placed by Levi in the late Severan period⁷ (figure 167). The *triclinium* here was paved around three sides with a rich polychrome pattern of stars of lozenges, which

enclose large and small squares containing a great variety of different motifs; perspective effects are sought in many of the individual elements. In the centre of the fourth side is a single panel, with the scene of the Drinking Contest set in an architectural frame. Columns project on either side, with pilasters behind, supporting a similarly projecting entablature and cornice of perspective dentils. Above this rises a curved pediment, ornamented with coffers seen from beneath, also in perspective. The figure scene is shown as if through this frame; a curtain hangs above, and an interior setting is more vaguely indicated by a pillar behind the figures. In contrast to this powerful three-dimensional illusionism, smaller panels in other rooms of the same house show a contrary taste: one or two figures are isolated against a plain white background, with at most a strip of groundline beneath their feet, and setting is reduced to a minimum, so that the spatial sense is lost.

⁶ Levi AMP 117–19, pl.xx, from the House of the Man of Letters, placed by Levi in the Severan period; Levi, 'The novel of Ninos and Semiramis', *ProcPhilSoc* 87, 1944, 420–8. Cf. also K. Weitzmann, 'Illustrations of Euripides and Homer in the mosaics of Antioch', in R. Stillwell ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes III The Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton 1941), 233–47; A.M. Friend, 'Menander and Glykera in the

mosaics of Antioch', *ibid.*, 248–51.

⁷ Levi AMP 156–63, pls.xxx–xxxii, c1b–c, clvb. Levi's chart (625) places the house towards the end of the Severan period; he writes (156): 'under the triclinium mosaic was found abundant Early Roman ware, but with it also some sherds of Middle Roman (to the middle of the third century AD)'.

The figure style in this period remained generally faithful to classical principles; but the finely modulated colouring and *sfumato* of the earlier second century gave way in the later part of that century and the early third to a taste for sometimes exaggerated chiaroscuro effects, with dramatic colour contrasts. The difference is apparent in a comparison of the two scenes of the Drinking Contest, perhaps about a hundred and twenty years apart (figures 165, 167); the poses of the main figures show that they are derived from the same models. The earlier mosaic, from the Atrium House, contrasts the dark, strongly muscled body of Heracles, set against a light background, with the effeminate pale Dionysus, seen against an area of shadow; the modulations within the bodies and in the drapery are rendered by tesserae of innumerable gradations of colour. In the Severan mosaic the colour juxtapositions are much harsher, with stripes and patches of contrasting colour used to model; the musculature of Heracles' body, for instance, is indicated mainly by patches of white, yellow, and brownish-pink. Smaller details, such as the features and the fingers, are rendered mainly by outline. No more than two or three tones of the same colour are present, and brilliant blue, turquoise and red glass tesserae are used extensively for drapery or for the metal drinking vessels.

The taste for three-dimensional effects is found also in the ornamental decor of the late second and early third centuries, as the pattern surrounding the later of the two Drinking Contests shows. Contrasts of light and shade which give a strong sense of relief render not only individual motifs, but also the stars of lozenges which form the overall design. In general, the geometric repertory of this period often shared its motifs with the contemporary west, but the preference for polychromy led to very different effects: contrasts of coloured areas and the liking for a dark ground are characteristic. A new tendency perceptible in the ornamental repertory of the Severan period (with some timid antecedents even earlier) was the appearance of the style named by Levi 'rainbow style', which was to be of great importance in the fourth century.⁸ This abandons the practice of delineating geometric motifs by bands of contiguous tesserae of the same colour, or by the juxtaposition of uniformly coloured areas within firm contours. Instead, tesserae of each colour are set diag-

⁸ Levi AMP 405–7; cf. Balty, *ANRW* 415.

⁹ Levi AMP 226–56, pls.LII–LXI, CLX–CLXII; Baratte, *Louvre* 99–118, no.45, figs.94–125. The Constantinian coin which provided the *terminus post quem* for the mosaics has been identified by S. Campbell,

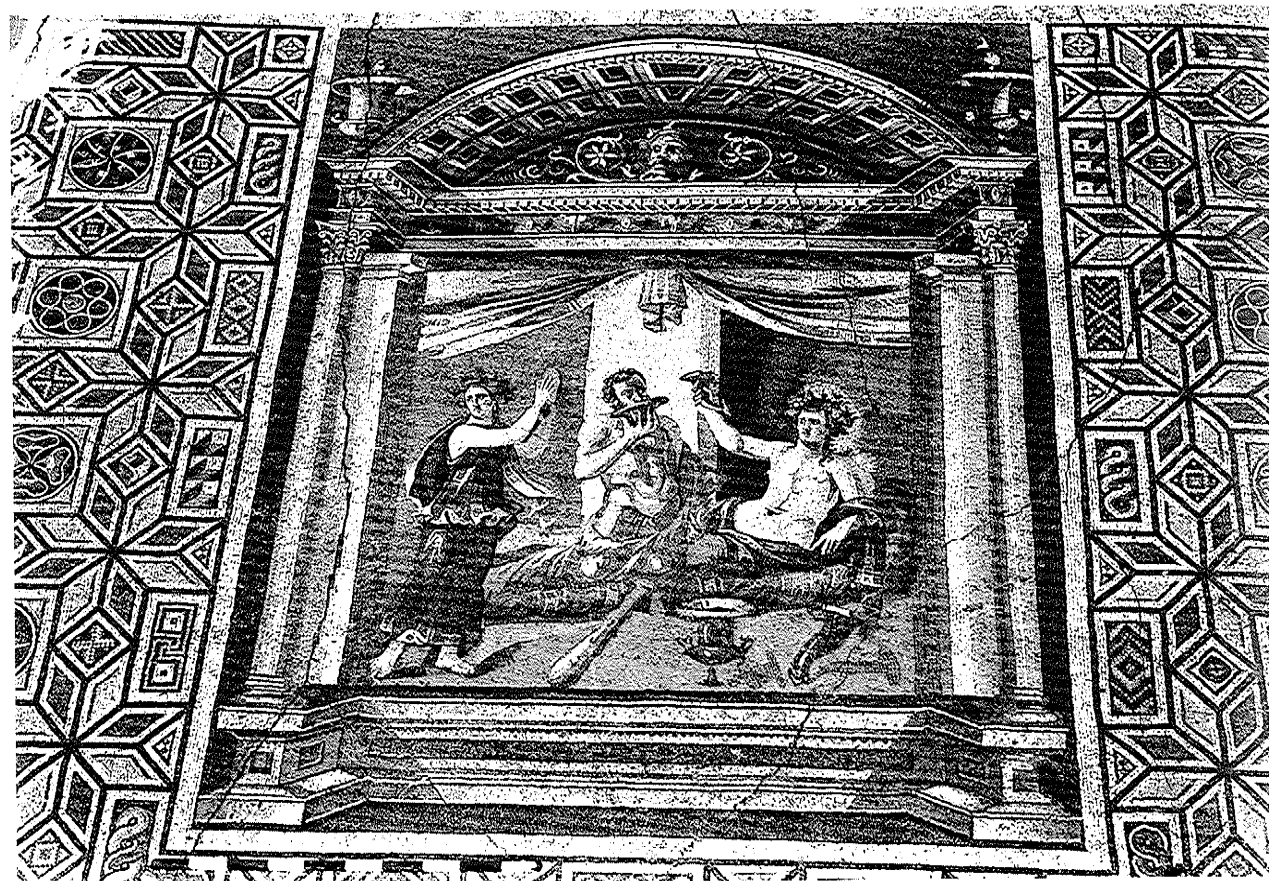


166 Antioch, Atrium House, *triclinium*, Judgement of Paris. Musée du Louvre MA 3443, Paris. 1.86 m square.

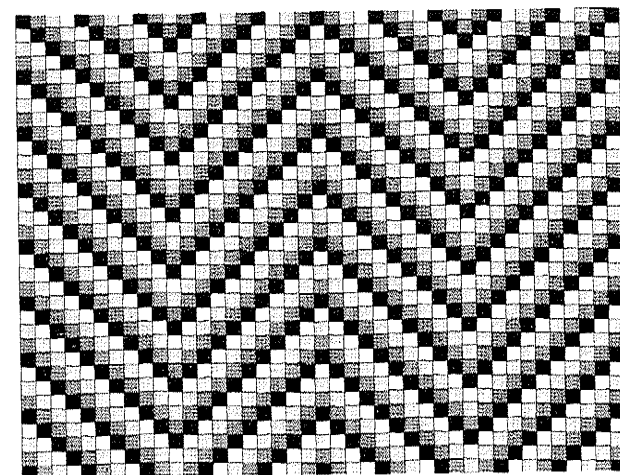
onally, with their points tangent, so that the colours appear to melt into one another; they form designs such as zigzags or chevrons (figure 168). It is a style in which traditional form disintegrates, and is replaced by a reliance upon colour; and it is one peculiar to mosaic, exploiting the nature and shape of the tesserae themselves. At first its use was only tentative, confined to the filling of small compartments in otherwise traditional designs: for instance, in some of the compartments between stars of lozenges in the ornamental surround of the Severan Drinking Contest (figure 167: rectangles to right of figured panel).

There is comparatively little development to be seen in the mosaics from Antioch which Levi places in the mid- and late third centuries. The normal system of composition continued to depend on one or more smallish panels, set in an ornamental surround often of great complexity; the liking for three-dimensional effects and for over-elaborate accumulation of detail continued to characterise the ornamental decor. The first decisive step in a new direction appears with the mosaics from the Constantinian Villa at Daphne, so named because a coin of Constantine the Great was supposedly found embedded in the mortar under the principal mosaic.⁹ The pavement of the large

'Antioch and the Corpus of Mosaics in Southern Turkey', *CMGR* 111, 143–8, as referring in fact to two identical coins of Constantius II. The type seems to be datable c.337–47, so the *terminus* should be placed slightly later than Levi proposed.



167 Antioch, House of Drinking Contest, *triclinium*, central panel showing drinking contest of Dionysus and Heracles. Princeton Art Museum. Probably first third of the third century AD.



168 Drawing of chevrons in rainbow style.

Room 1 was divided into two unequal sections, the smaller of which contained Dionysiac busts in small round or oval compartments, alternating with patterns of maeander. This maeander is two-dimensional; in contrast, the border

¹⁰ For examples of designs based on ceilings see below, ch. 19, ns. 32–3.



169 Antioch (Daphne), Constantinian Villa, Room 1, general view *in situ*. c.12.50 m × 8.30 m. Mid-fourth century AD.



170 Antioch (Daphne), Constantinian Villa, detail showing hunting scene between two Seasons. Musée du Louvre, MA 3444, Paris.

surrounding both sections of the floor consists of a perspective maeander, framing panels with birds, rural scenes, Erotes, and personifications of the virtues. Compositional innovation appears in the larger square section (figure 169). This had an octagonal pool at its centre, and was divided along the diagonals by black bands bearing full-length figures of the four Seasons, rising from acanthus clumps at the angles; thick fleshy acanthus scrolls, also on a black ground, grow along the sides. Trapezoidal spaces are left between the diagonals and contain hunting scenes. The composition appears to reflect the decoration of a vaulted ceiling; bands of egg-and-tongue moulding frame the panels and add to the illusion of relief. Isolated examples of decorative schemes derived from ceilings had appeared earlier at Antioch, but this is the first example which abandoned decisively the 'window-in-the-floor' approach in favour of a more unified all-over design; even here, only half the floor is treated in this way.¹⁰ One of the trapezoidal hunting scenes shows Meleager and Atalanta, but the others belong to the more realistic hunting repertory, with figures in contemporary costume hunting big game and making an offering to Artemis at the start of the hunt (figure 170).

They are set in a landscape of trees, rocks and bushes, rendered with the type of spatial ambiguity seen much earlier in other parts of the empire such as North Africa: the groundline blends into the white background, and spatial relations between figures and landscape are not clear. The figures of the Seasons, the Dionysiac busts, and the heads contained in the scroll of the border, all show characteristics associated with the so-called Constantinian renaissance: calm, smooth surfaces, careful delineation of detail, a classicism with none of the emotional content and strong chiaroscuro of the preceding century. On the other hand, smaller figures such as the hunters are reminiscent of the art of the Tetrarchy: squat and lively, with big round heads, and a disregard for anatomical accuracy.¹¹

II

In other parts of Syria very few mosaics are preserved before the third century AD. While new discoveries may alter the picture, it seems unlikely that mosaic workshops were established widely outside Antioch before the Severan period, though isolated finds are known. But from the mid-third century onwards other centres became prominent, and their production supplements, and sometimes corrects, the picture given by the Antioch material.

The small town of Shahba-Philippopolis on the borders of southern Syria and Arabia was the birthplace of the Emperor Philip the Arab (AD 244–9), renamed and made a Roman colony in his honour, and embellished with impressive buildings. The year AD 244 provides a *terminus post quem* for the fine series of mosaics found there, though it is not clear how long afterwards they continued to be produced. Janine Balty has distinguished three main groups on the basis of style, and suggests that they begin at the time of the city's elevation, and run into the late Constantinian period (second quarter of the fourth century).¹² They include a number of figured panels of exceptionally high quality; little is recorded of ornamental decor, other than the borders of the figured panels. The panels themselves tend to be larger than the typical

second- and third-century mosaics at Antioch: many are over two metres square. Their monumental character is further emphasised by elaborate borders: these include lush scrolls with animals and hunting Erotes on a black ground, of the type seen in the Constantinian Villa at Antioch. There are also more complex figured borders: thus a panel with Artemis surprised at her bath by Actaeon is framed by a magnificent garland of fruit (here for once on a white ground), full of birds, and supported by little winged figures of Attis¹³ (figure 171; plate 29).

Several of these mosaics show extraordinarily classical figure-style and sense of composition; the conception of the mosaic as picture is very much alive, despite the monumentalisation of the scale. One shows marine Aphrodite riding in her shell supported by two ichthyocentaurs, while two Erotes hold an arc of drapery above her head¹⁴ (figure 172). The theme is rare in the east, though common elsewhere, especially in North Africa. In contrast to the African examples of this date, the Shahba version retains a much more classical sense of spatial unity within the scene itself. The colouring is delicate and a little subdued, with a fine range of tones of pink and beige; only a slight tendency to schematisation, and a few anatomical infelicities (the lower parts of the ichthyocentaurs, for example) mark a craftsman not entirely secure in following his model.

To Balty's later group from Shahba belongs an astonishing bust of the sea-goddess Tethys¹⁵ (figure 173). Fish are entangled in her hair, a sea-dragon coiled around her neck, and she holds a steering-oar. The figure of the sea-goddess occurs frequently on mosaics of the region of Antioch, but never with the power shown here: almost too large for the frame, the figure dominates the small room where it is set. The characteristics of the 'Constantinian renaissance' are apparent in the broad smooth surfaces and the careful delineation, for instance of the wide open eyes; but the combination of the massive force of the face and the restlessness of the dark hair makes this a work of exceptional quality. Around it, a wide border shows Erotes in boats and fishing, on a sea marked by broad bands of colour.

The best known of the mosaics from Shahba-

(Saarbrücken 1989), 495–502 (= *Proche-Orient* 63–6).

¹³ Balty, *Syrie* 20–3, nos. 5–6; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 142, pls. vi.2, vii.1.

¹⁴ Balty, *Proche-Orient* 35, 143, pl. vi.1; Balty, *Syrie* 16–19, nos. 3–4. For another eastern example of the theme on the (much later) mosaic from Sarrin in Osroene, see below, n. 51.

¹⁵ Balty, *Syrie* 66–8, nos. 28–9; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 66, 144, pl. x.2.



171 Shahba-Philippopolis, mosaic of Artemis and Actaeon. Souweida Museum. Central panel 1.55 m square. Mid-third century AD.



172 Shahba-Philippopolis, mosaic of marine Aphrodite. Souweida Museum. Central panel 2.68 m square. Mid-third century AD.



173 Shahba-Philippopolis, mosaic of Tethys. Shahba Museum *in situ*. 1.26 m square. Probably first half of the fourth century AD.

¹¹ Tesserae average 5–6 mm, slightly smaller in some details; marble, limestone and glass are used.

¹² Balty, *Proche-Orient* 141–8, slightly modifying her previous discussions in ANRW 396–403, 409–11, 422–5, and in 'La mosaïque en Syrie', in J.-M. Dentzer, W. Orthmann eds., *Archéologie et Histoire de la Syrie* 11, *La Syrie de l'époque achéménide à l'avènement de l'Islam*



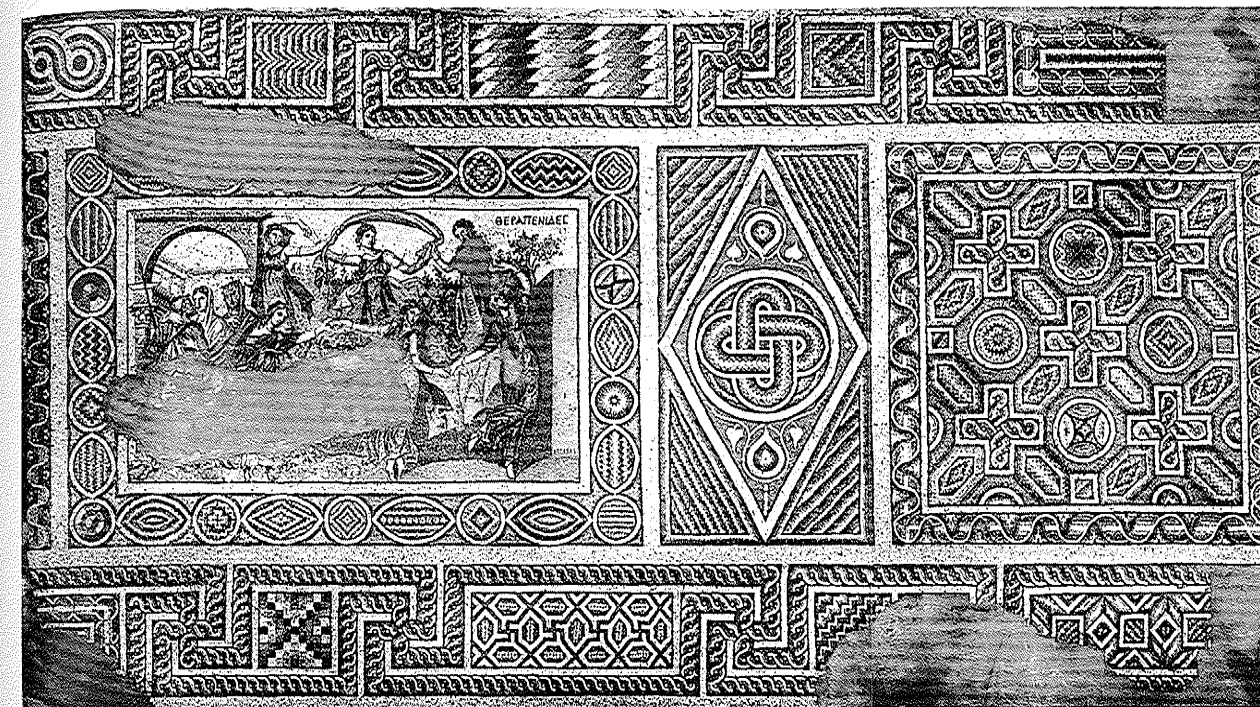
174 Shahba-Philippopolis, allegorical mosaic of Aion. National Museum, Damascus. Figured panel 2 m × 1.42 m. Second half of the third century AD.

Philippopolis is the complex allegorical scene now in the National Museum in Damascus¹⁶ (figure 174). The taste for allegories and personifications of abstract ideas appears at Antioch in the course of the third century, and was common throughout the east for the next two hundred years. Such scenes often convey complex combinations of ideas; they are frequently found in *triclinia*, where they might provide a stimulus for speculation and philosophical discussion. It is seldom, however, that a scene is as dense in content and significance as the Philippopolis mosaic. A frame of perspective maeander surrounds a panel of fine workmanship, with tesserae much smaller than those of the border. The figures are closely packed in a vaguely indicated rocky landscape; almost all have their names inscribed (in Greek) beside

them. They include figures from mythology, long established semi-mythological personifications, and others which are more unusual. One theme is the fertility of the earth: the earth-goddess *Ge*, with four children bearing fruits (the *karpoi*), and behind her Triptolemos, inventor of agriculture, wearing a farmer's hat and leading an ox, and *Georgia*, agriculture herself. Two putti, pouring water from jars above, are labelled *drosoi*, dew; on either side in the sky are the heads of the four winds. Images of time and eternity occupy the left side of the panel. *Aion*, personification of eternal time, holds the wheel of the heavens, and behind him the four Seasons, the cycle of time on earth perpetually renewed, guarantee the fertility of the earth shown in the centre. The association of these themes is found elsewhere in various forms; *Aion-Aeternitas*, with the Seasons and the circle of the zodiac, has been seen on mosaics discussed above at Silin in Tripolitania and Emerita in Spain.¹⁷ More unusual is the combination of these with the scene on the right-hand side, where Prometheus sits modelling the first man (*Protoplastos*) from clay, while Hermes holds the butterfly-winged little soul, *Psyche*; beside him is an

¹⁶ Balty, *Syrie* 28, no.9; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 144, pl.1x.2; E. Will, 'Une nouvelle mosaïque de Chahba-Philippopolis', *AAS* 3, 1953, 27-48; A. Festugière, 'La mosaïque de Philippopolis et les sarcophages au Prométhée', *Revue des Arts* 1957, 195-202 (= *Hermétisme et Mystique Païenne* (Paris 1967), 313-21); J. Charbonneaux, 'Aïon et Philippe l'Arabe', *MEFR* 72, 1960, 253-72.

¹⁷ Above, ch.7, n.53; ch.9, ns.15-21.



175 Apamea, building under cathedral, mosaic from corridor with panel of dancing maidservants (with label *Therapenides*) greeting the return of Odysseus. Panel now in Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Brussels. 2.34 m × 1.39 m. Third quarter of the fourth century AD.

unnamed draped figure, probably another form of the soul, that which is united with the body during life. The life and death of man are therefore shown as part of the continuing cycle of nature. The scene has been associated with imperial propaganda: Charbonneaux suggests that the figure of Aion is a portrait of the emperor Philip himself, and associates the whole scene with the celebration of the one thousandth anniversary of Rome by that emperor in AD 248, in which themes of eternity and renewal were especially prominent. The mosaic itself may be slightly later than this; it is possible that it reproduces a painting rather than being a completely new creation.

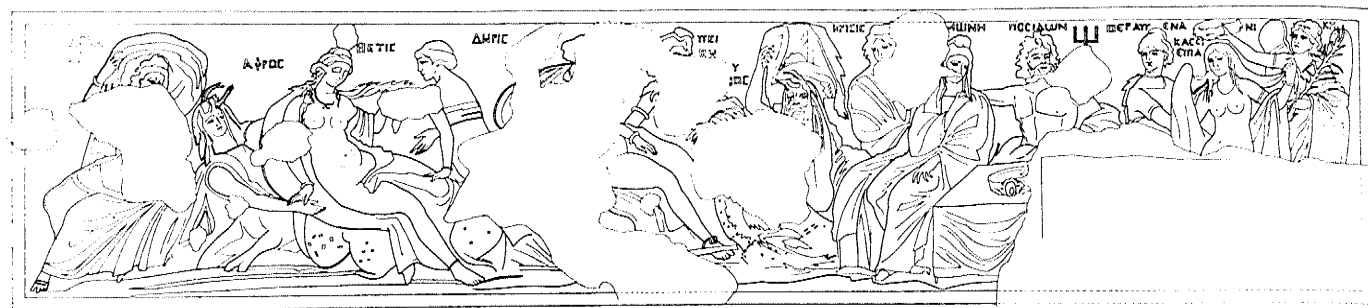
The other leading producer of mosaics known in Syria was Apamea in the Orontes valley, rival of Antioch in wealth and prestige. Isolated mosaics dating from the first to third centuries AD have been found here, but it is only with the fourth century that a consecutive series begins, which runs through into the sixth. Those from the fourth century show still the traditional composition of pictorial panels, sometimes of substantial size, framed by elaborate geometric decor. They are best exemplified by the mosaics from a building beneath the later Cathedral. Two long corridors here had a matching design: borders of maeander around rich geometric patterns, which include both panels of perspective maeander and two-dimensional carpets of rainbow style. The patterns indicate a date in

the third quarter of the fourth century. In the midst of this are figured panels: the Return of Odysseus, greeted by a chorus of dancing maidservants (labelled *Therapenides*) (figure 175); Socrates teaching in a circle of the Sages; allegorical scenes; and a frieze illustrating the myth of the beauty contest between Kassiopeia and the Nereids, in what appears to be a local Syrian version (figures 176, 177). This unrolls a series of thirteen figures identified by name, who include, apart from the main actors, and Poseidon and Amymone as judges, personifications such as *Krisis* (judgement), and the extraordinary figure of *Bythos* (the depths of the sea), with an enormous mass of dark green seaweed above his head and blue streaks in hair and beard.¹⁸

The themes of the figured panels clearly indicate a taste for philosophy, for allegory, and for sometimes obscure mythology; moreover the scene of Socrates teaching uses a scheme already applied at this date to Christ teaching in the midst of the apostles, and seems to assert pagan values in direct opposition to those of the Christians.¹⁹ Janine and Jean Charles Balty see more here than an expression of a patron's personal taste, and suggest that a coherent philosophical programme lies behind the figured panels,

¹⁸ Balty, *Syrie* 76-90, nos.33-40; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 42-6, 265-313, with previous bibliography. For Kassiopeia, see below, n.23, and ch.13, n.26.

¹⁹ Cf. G.M.A. Hanfmann, 'Socrates and Christ', *HSCP* 60, 1951, 205-33.



176 Apamea, building under cathedral, frieze with Judgement of Nereids, drawing. Apamea Museum. 7.69 m × 1.56 m. Third quarter of the fourth century AD.



177 Apamea, building under cathedral, frieze with Judgement of Nereids, detail showing Kassiopeia. Apamea Museum.

in which the mythological scenes have a secondary significance, as allegories of the search for beauty and wisdom. Apamea was the centre in the fourth century of a school of Neoplatonic philosophers, who favoured interpretations of this nature. The plan of the building seems unsuitable for a private residence, and the Baltys further propose that it may have been the seat of the school. In

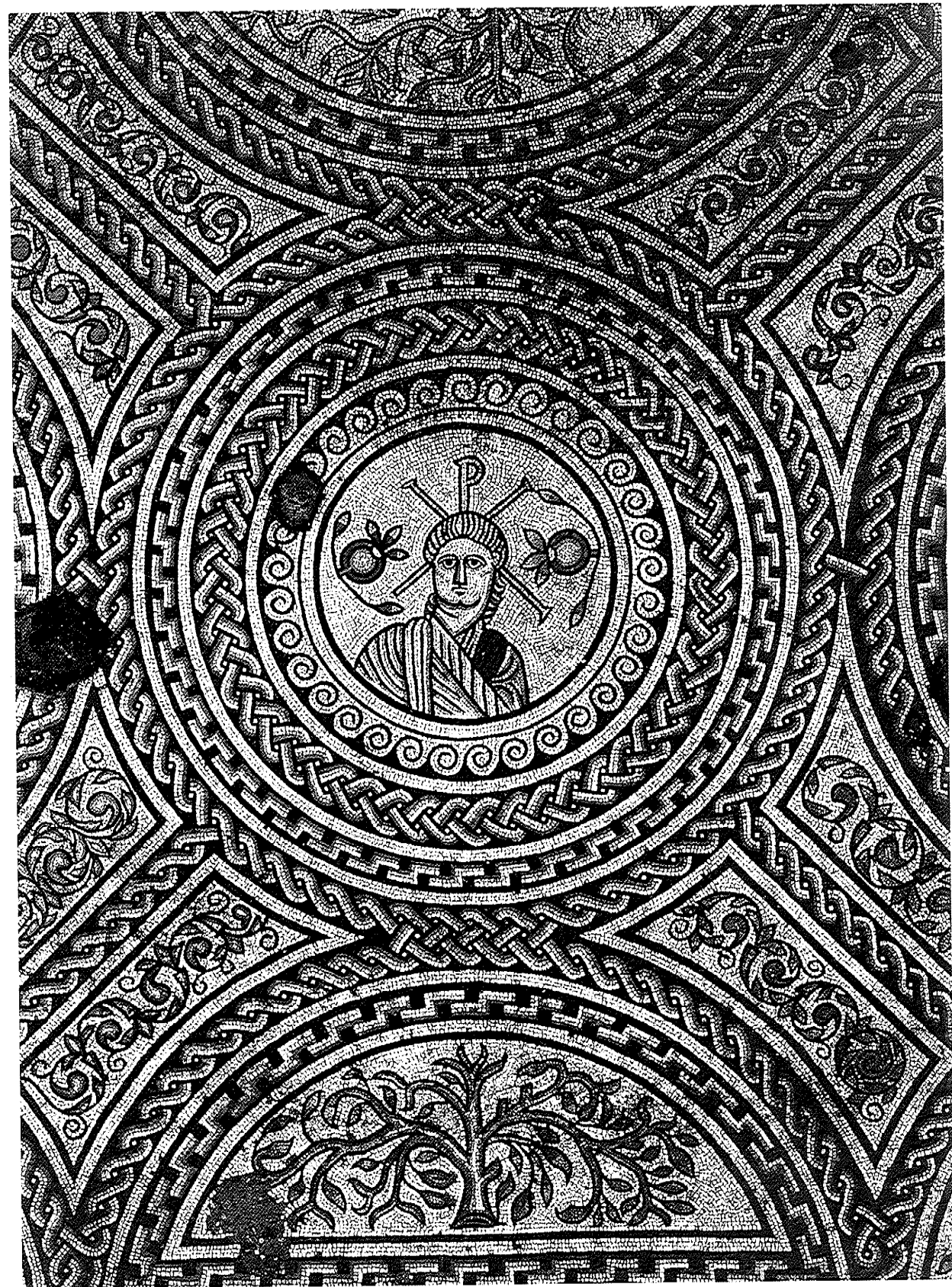
²⁰ See the works collected and cited in Balty, *Proche-Orient* (cit.n.18), especially the *mises au point*, *ibid.* 42–6, 299–305.

the present incomplete state of excavation this attractive identification cannot be proved definitively; but whatever their precise context, the mosaics give vivid testimony to the vitality of pagan culture in mid-fourth-century Apamea and to the force of classical tradition both in style and content.²⁰

The majority of the Syrian mosaics discussed so far drew their subjects from mythology or from allegory, but contemporary aristocratic life also provided a source. One of the most outstanding works of this region is the



14 Woodchester, Villa, Orpheus and the beasts, detail of leopard. Probably early fourth century AD.

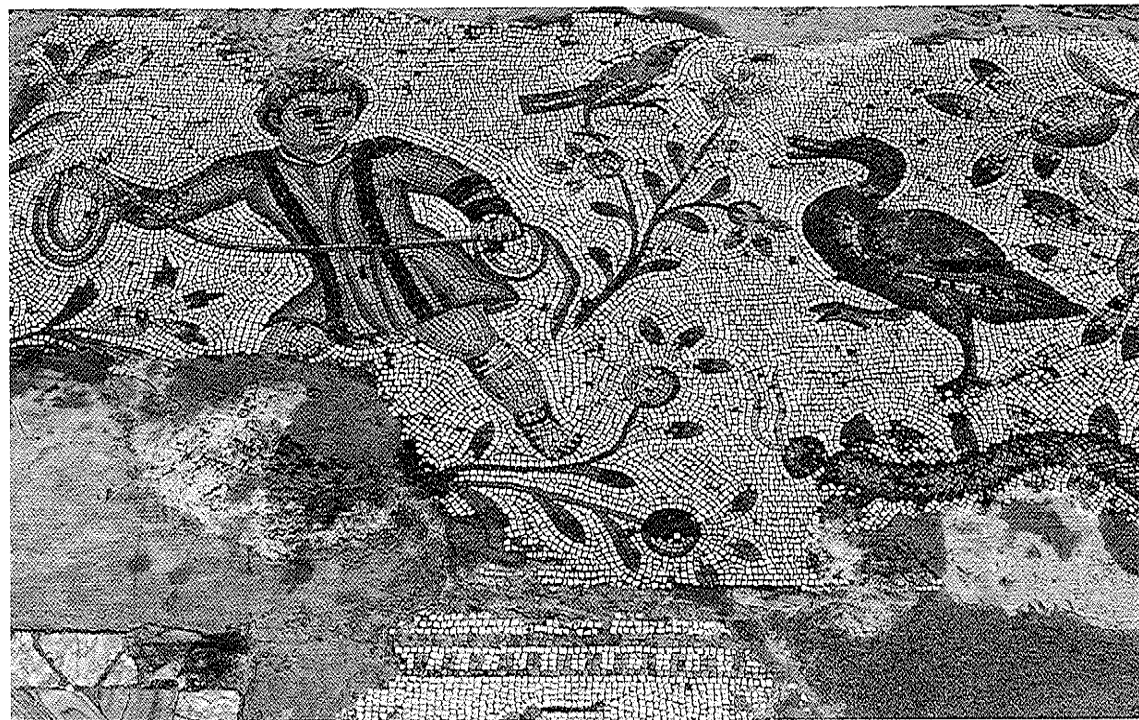


15 Hinton St Mary, central medallion with bust of Christ.
British Museum, London. Mid- to late fourth century AD.

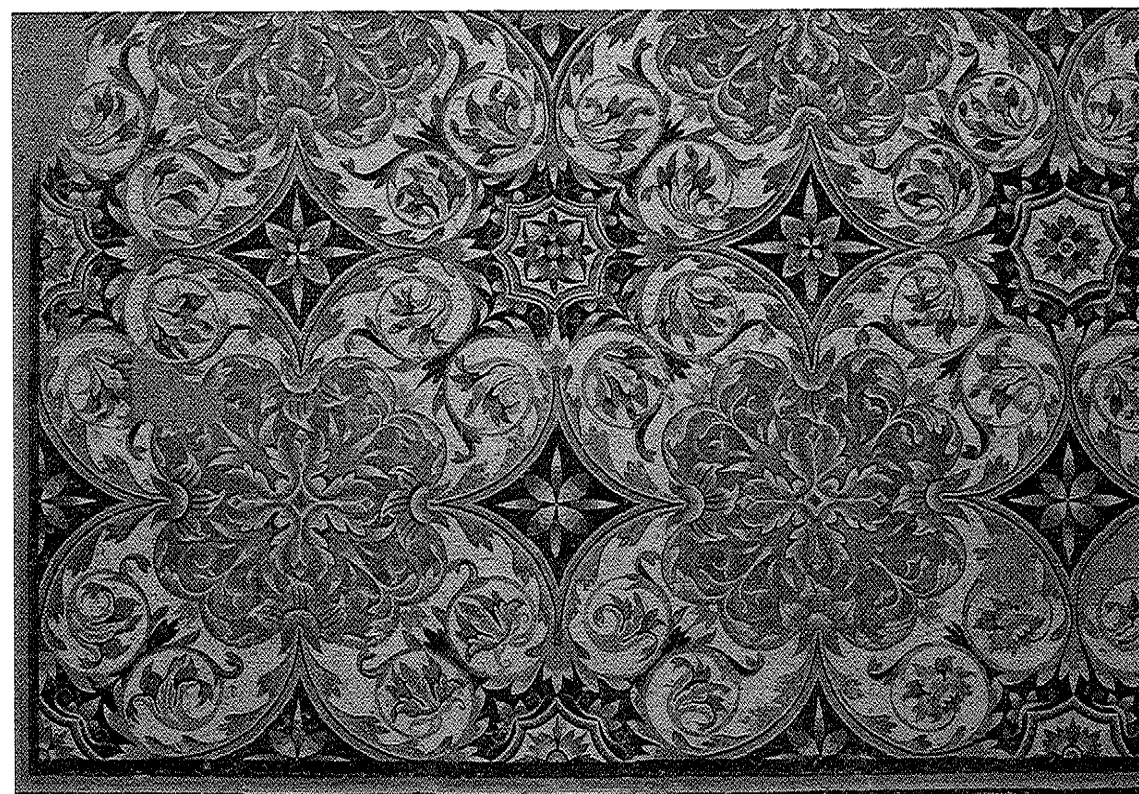
16 Thysdrus, House of the Dionysiac Procession, Room A,
vegetal designs, detail of scrolls. El Djem Museum. Mid-second
century AD.



17 Thuburbo Maius, House of Protomai, *trifolium* sector,
rooms XIII–XIV, geometric-floral mosaics. 3.25 m × 3.20 m and
2.90 m × 3.10 m. Second half of the fourth century AD.



18 Carthage, House of the Horses, Mosaic of Horses, detail of border, child hunting bird. Carthage, Antiquarium. Early fourth century AD.



19 Thamugadi, House of Piscina, mosaic of acanthus rosettes. Timgad Museum. 6.40 m × 5.60 m. Probably early third century AD.



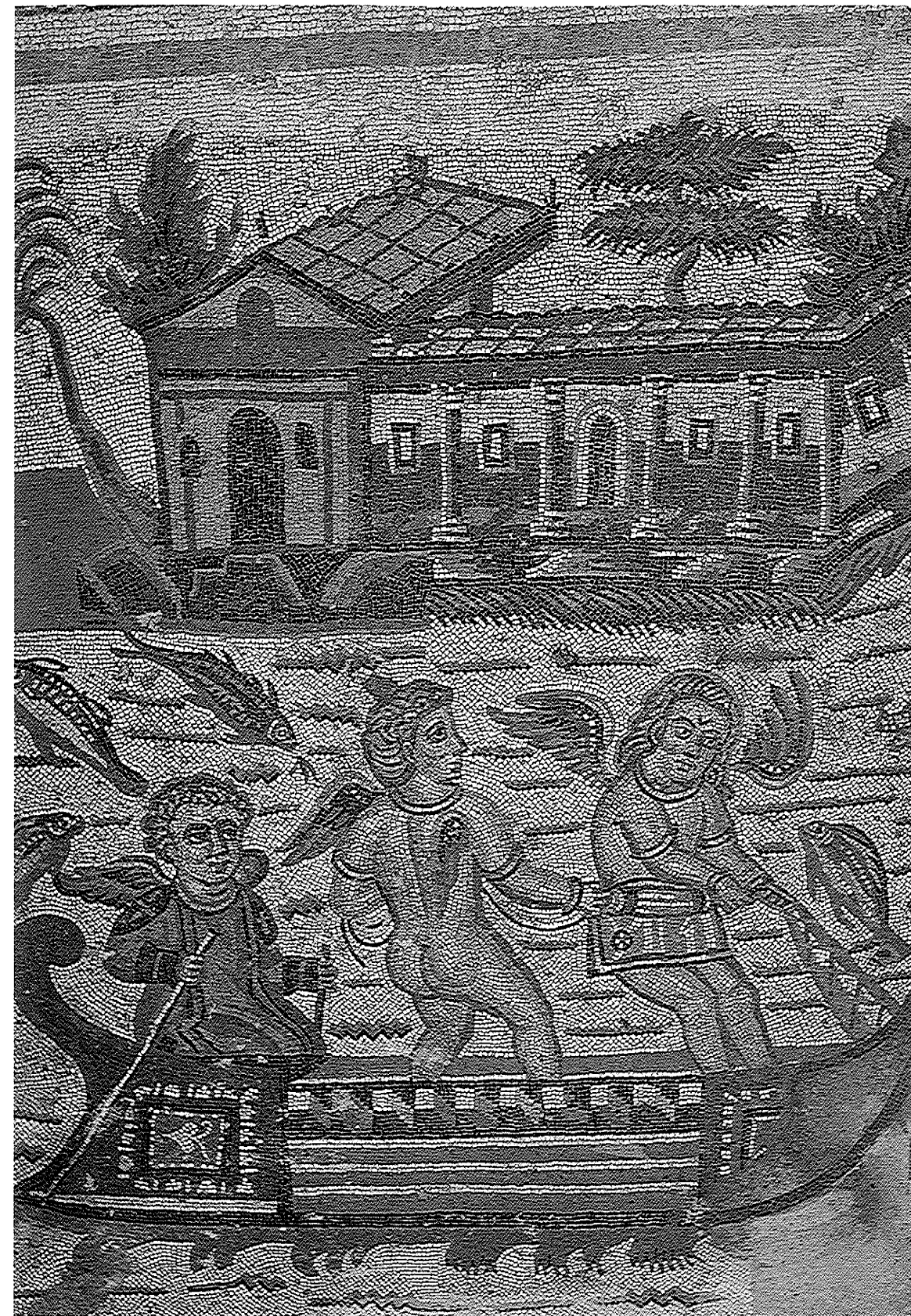
20 Thamugadi, Ilot 81, mosaic of acanthus scrolls, detail. Timgad Museum. Probably third century AD.



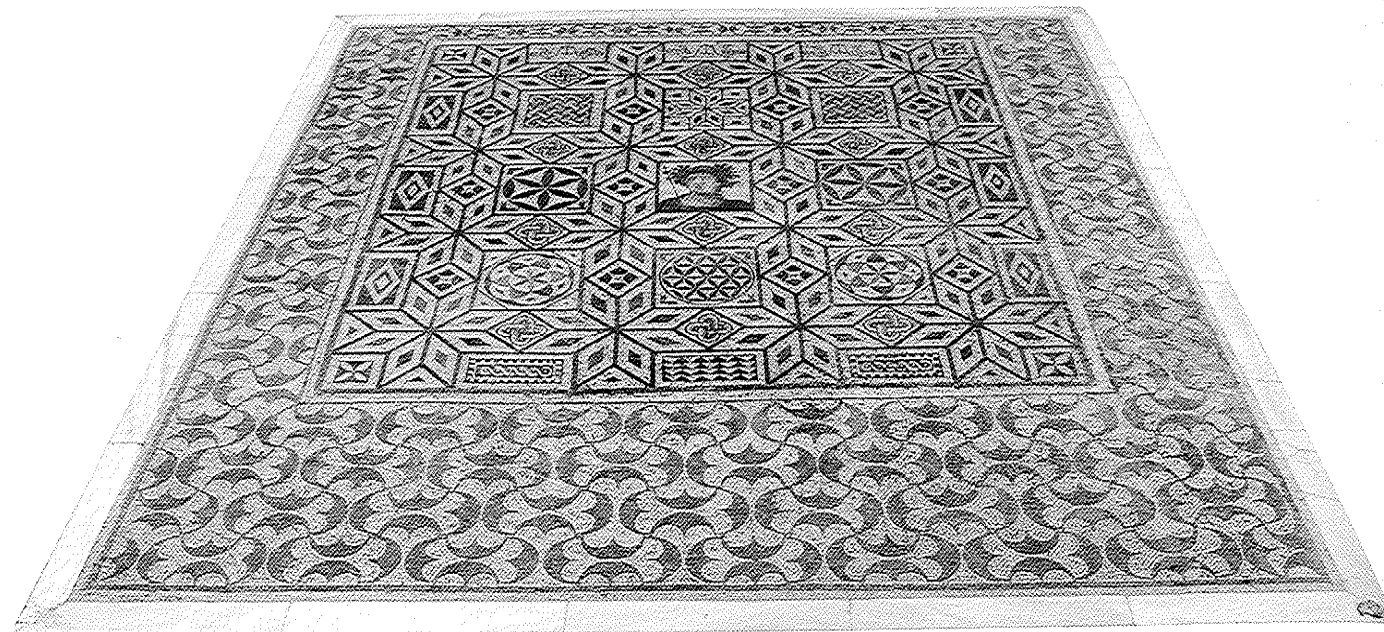
21 Piazza Armerina, corridor of Great Hunt (36), detail showing capture of rhinoceros. Probably first third of the fourth century AD.



22 Piazza Armerina, corridor of Great Hunt (36), detail showing hunter and beasts. Probably first third of the fourth century AD.



23 Piazza Armerina, room 22, Eros fishing, detail. Probably first third of the fourth century AD.



above

24 Itálica, geometric mosaic with bust of Dionysus. Museo Arqueológico, Seville, Inv. 786. 2.70 m × 2.96 m. Probably mid- to third quarter of the second century AD.

left

25 Emerita, Cosmological Mosaic, detail of Nubs (Cloud) with Wind. Probably late second to early third century AD.



178 Mariamin, mosaic of Musicians. Hama Museum. 3.80 m × 2.78 m. End of the fourth century AD.

mosaic of the Musicians from Mariamin²¹ (figures 178, 179, 180). It came from an apsidal room, evidently a dining-room; the diners would recline in the apse, while entertainers performed in the rectangular space in front. The mosaic filled the whole of the rectangular space, its subject suiting the function of the room. An acanthus scroll peopled by hunting Erotes on a black ground (one of the richest such scrolls known) frames a big panel. Six female musicians stand on a wooden stage. One dances with castanets, another plays the cithara, a third strikes metal bowls spread out on a table, a fourth prepares to play the double flute. Then comes an organist, standing behind her instrument; and the last to the left holds long clappers (*crotala*). In front two small boys, dressed as Erotes, tread the bellows of the organ. The careful portrayal of the instruments, especially of the organ, make the mosaic an important source for the study of ancient music. The execution is superb, with tesserae often less than 5 mm square, and a wide range of tones, including occasional use of glass. The women, about two-thirds life-size, are dressed with the greatest elegance in long embroidered robes whose folds form regular decorative patterns. This refined but sometimes schematic elegance is typical of the style known as 'Theodosian mannerism', of the end of the fourth century; another mark of this

style is a certain hieratic character, seen in the frontal presentation of some of the figures, with large staring eyes fixed on the spectator. Aspects of the ornament confirm this date. Details such as the reverse perspective of the table betray an abandonment of classical principles; but in general the mosaic is astonishing for the survival so late of the concept of the mosaic as picture, with its own space and unified action, as well as for the fineness of execution. It is all the more surprising in that it cannot be attributed to the copying of a much older model: theme and costume belong to the contemporary world.

III

The use of mosaics was not confined to the long Hellenised cities of western Syria; they are found also in some frontier regions where the impact of Graeco-Roman civilisation was in general much less profound, and even beyond the

²¹ Balty, *Syrie* 94–100, nos. 42–5; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 72, pl. xvii; A. Zaquq, M. Duchesne-Guillemin, 'La mosaïque de Mariamin (conservée au Musée de Hama)', *AAS* 20, 1970, 93–125, figs. 1–28, with too early a date; M. Duchesne-Guillemin, 'Etude complémentaire de la "Mosaïque au concert" de Hama et étude préliminaire d'une mosaïque inédite de Soucida', *RendLinc* ser. 8, 30, 1975, 99–111.



179 Mariamin, mosaic of Musicians, detail showing dancer with castanets.

frontiers of the empire. In the caravan city of Palmyra in the Syrian desert two houses have been found decorated with mosaics, probably to be placed in the third quarter of the third century.²² Until the sack of the city by the Romans in AD 273 Palmyra was at the height of her prosperity as a semi-independent principality; and the numerous works of sculpture found there are marked by a very idiosyncratic style, heavily imbued with elements from the Parthian and Sassanian kingdoms of the east. None of this, however, is apparent in the mosaics, which belong wholly within the Graeco-Roman tradition. The elaborate geometric designs have numerous parallels at Antioch; they frame panels containing conventional mythological scenes. In one house a big panel represents Achilles on Skyros, Asklepios appears in another panel, other figured scenes are too fragmentary for identification. In the second house a big circle contains the beauty contest between Kassiopeia and the Nereids (figure 181): the same rare myth is found at a later

²² H. Stern, *Les Mosaïques des Maisons d'Achille et de Cassiopée à Palmyre* (Paris 1977), proposing a date between 235 and 273; Balty, *Syrie* 30–4, nos.10–12; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 66–7, 291–7, pl.11.2, accepting 273 as a *terminus ante quem*.

²³ J.Ch. Balty, 'Une version orientale méconnue du mythe de Cassiopée', in L. Kahil, C. Augé eds., *Mythologie gréco-romaine, mythologies périphériques. Etudes d'iconographie* (Paris 1981), 95–106. Cf. above n.18; below, ch.13, n.26.



180 Mariamin, mosaic of Musicians, detail showing flautist.

date at Apamea and at Nea Paphos on Cyprus.²³ Busts of the Seasons and a centauromachy accompany it; some figures are labelled in Greek. Nothing in either of these ensembles alludes in any way to Palmyra or to its indigenous culture. It may safely be assumed that these mosaics were executed by a workshop summoned from one of the centres in western Syria; it is also clear that the Palmyrene patrons not only desired a decoration for their houses in a technique foreign to their city, but were also satisfied that style and subject-matter should likewise belong to the culture of the Roman Empire.

Very different are the mosaics from Edessa, modern Urfa, beyond the Euphrates in Osrhoene. The region was first a client kingdom, then (from AD 195) a Roman frontier province; local kings continued to rule in Edessa, with interruptions, until 241/2. About a dozen mosaics have been found here, all those whose origin is recorded coming from rock-cut tombs.²⁴ A few show subjects from

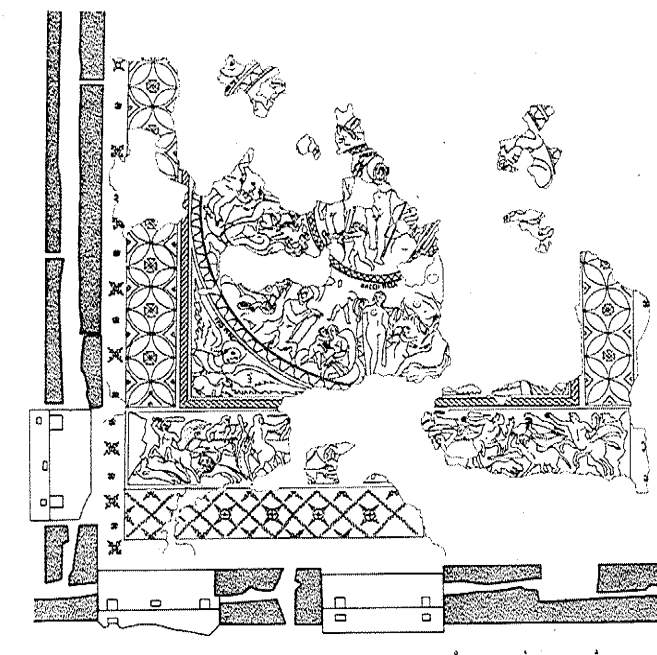
²⁴ J. Leroy, 'Mosaïques funéraires d'Edesse', *Syria* 34, 1957, 306–42, pls.xxi–xxii; J. Segal, *Edessa, 'the Blessed City'* (Oxford 1970), 32–4, pls.1–3, 16–20, 43–4; Balty, *ANRW* 387–90, pls.xxiii–xxiv; K. Parlasca, 'Neues zu den Mosaiken von Edessa und Seleukeia am Euphrat', *CMGR* III, 227–34; M. Colledge, 'Some remarks on the Edessa funerary mosaics', *CMGR* IV, 189–97, pls.cv–cxiv. For the historical background see Millar, *Roman Near East* (cit.n.1), 125, 472–81.

the Graeco-Roman repertory, such as Orpheus and a phoenix. The great majority have explicitly funerary scenes, with portraits, in bust or full-length, standing family groups, or a banqueting scene (figures 182, 183). Inscriptions in Syriac give the names of those represented, all Semitic, and other details. Several also have dates, probably indicating a period of production of about twenty years, between c. AD 218 and 238.²⁵ One includes a portrait of a richly dressed old man named Abgar, who has been identified as the king Abgar VIII, the Great, who reigned AD 177–212; his bust appears in the midst of the members of the family of the founder of the tomb, Barsimya, who was evidently a high functionary at court²⁶ (figure 184). The characters wear eastern (Parthian) costume, the men with long-sleeved tunics, baggy trousers, and often elaborate headgear of Phrygian caps or turbans. The women have even more elaborate head-dresses, with high caps or steeples from which their veils hang behind. Equally clearly eastern is the style. The figures are aligned in paratactic rows, while those of lesser importance such as children are inserted wherever space is available; they are all frontal, with large eyes fixed on the observer. Neither spatial relations nor anatomical structure are of interest to the mosaicists; the background is plain white. Detail is linear, especially in the features with heavily outlined eyes and brows; folds of the drapery are indicated by broad stripes of colour, the beards of older men by alternate stripes of black, grey, and white. Both in style and in subject-matter these mosaics recall the funerary sculpture of Palmyra, which shows a similar concentration on the impressive presentation of its subjects, with all the details of elaborate costume and ornament. Nevertheless, the borders which surround the panels use ornamental motifs taken from the standard mosaic repertory – guilloche, wave, crowstep; and the technique in no way differs from that of more western centres. The Edessa funerary mosaics appear to illustrate a development very rare among mosaics: as the essentially Graeco-Roman craft was introduced to a region where it was foreign, it was adapted to serve local needs and assimilated to the local artistic tastes.²⁷

Mosaics have even been found right outside the Roman

²⁵ See Colledge, *ibid.* Three are clearly dated to AD 224, 228 and 235/6 respectively. Two others, less clearly legible, are normally read as indicating dates of 259/60 and 278; Colledge proposes revised readings, which would place them in the same two decades as the others.

²⁶ H.W.J. Drijvers, 'Ein neuentdecktes edessenisches Grabmosaik', *Antike Welt* 12.3, 1981, 17–20. The identification as the King Abgar is questioned by Colledge, *ibid.*, 194–5.

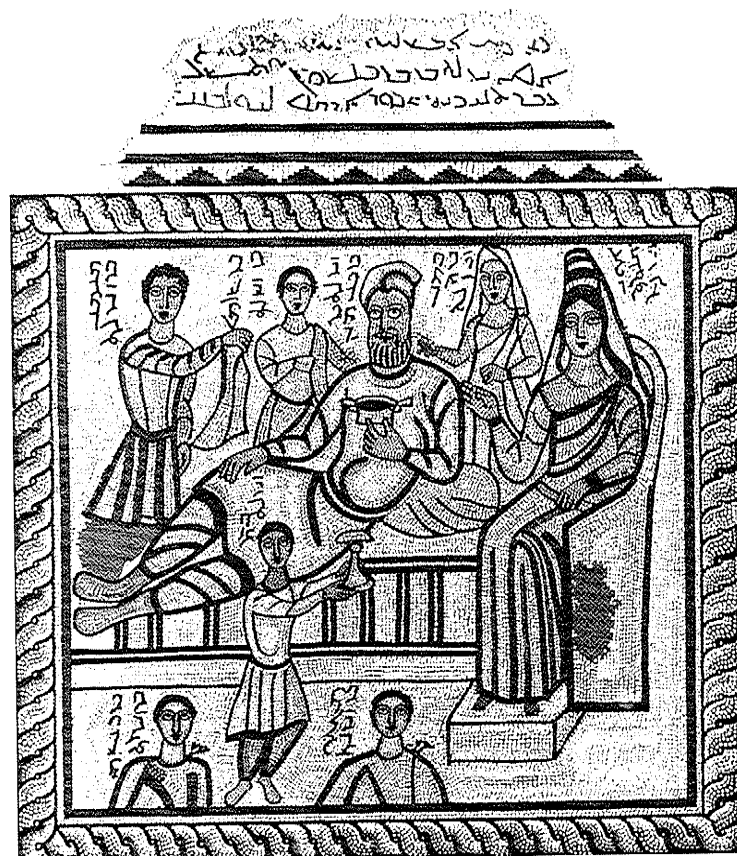


181 Palmyra, House of Kassiopeia, drawing. Fragments in National Museum, Damascus. Original dimensions c.8.30 m × 8 m. Probably third quarter of the third century AD.



182 Edessa, Family Portrait mosaic. Probably AD 218–238.

²⁷ For a later mosaic from Osrhoene that does not show these local characteristics, see below, n.51, on the mosaic from Sarrin. For even more remote mosaics from Georgia, one with Greek inscriptions, see M. Džumberovna Odišeli, *Spätantike und frühchristliche Mosaiken in Georgien* (eds. R. Pillinger, B. Zimmermann, Vienna 1995).



183 Edessa, Funerary Couch mosaic. Probably AD 218–238.



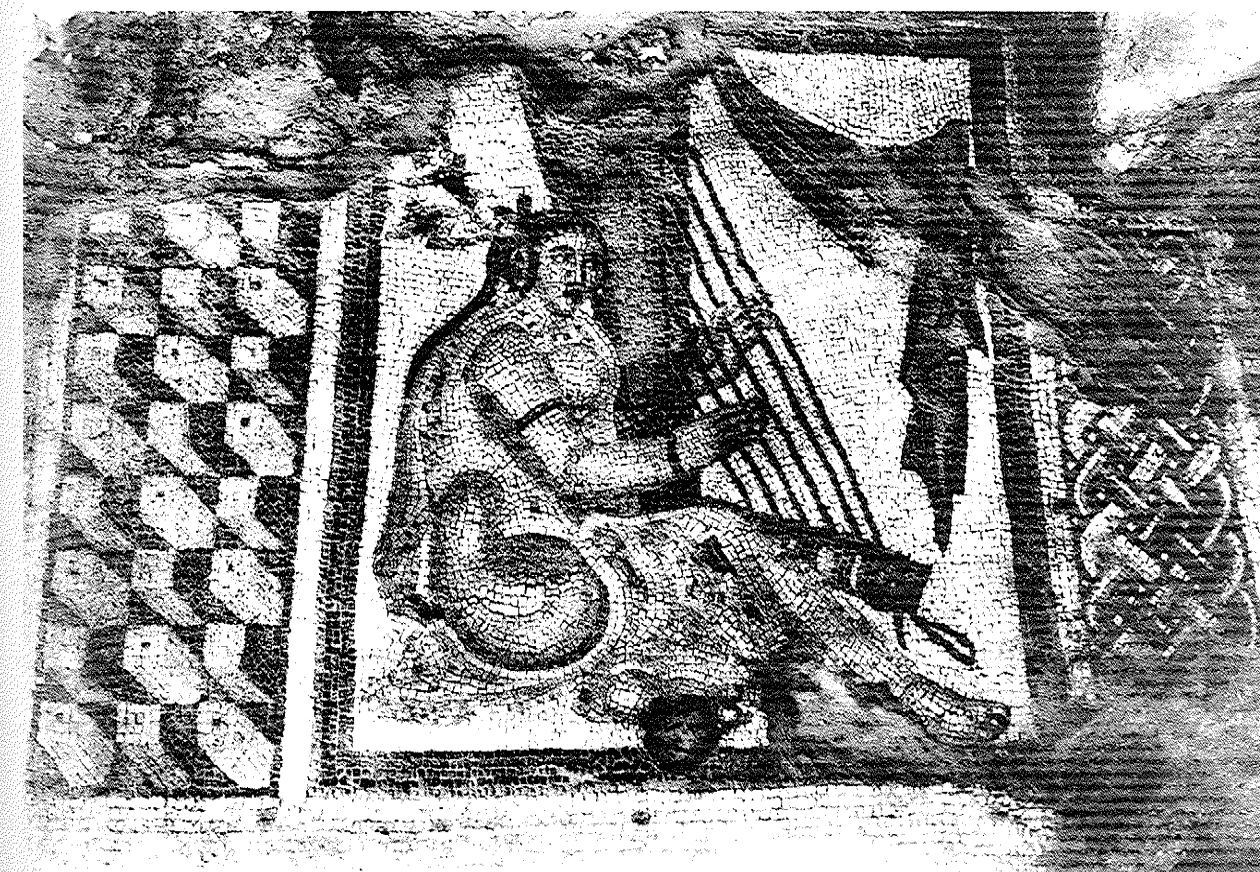
184 Edessa, Mosaic of Barsimya with portrait of Abgar. Probably AD 218–238.

Empire, decorating the palace of the Sassanian king Sapor I at Bishapur in Iran. Sapor twice sacked Antioch in the course of attacks on the eastern Roman provinces in AD 253 and 260, taking many of the inhabitants captive to Persia. Following his defeat and capture of the Roman emperor Valerian, also in 260, he constructed his new palace at Bishapur, whose decoration shows evidence of the presence of Graeco-Roman craftsmen alongside Iranian elements. The central room of an *iwan*-complex (a vaulted hall flanked by two narrower rooms, opening directly off a court) was decorated with strips of mosaic along the side walls; the centre of the room was apparently paved with solid stone slabs.²⁸ The mosaic strips followed the contours of the projecting and receding walls, and vary in width accordingly. Figured panels alternated with smaller panels containing ornamental designs: zigzags and chevrons in rainbow style, perspective boxes, guilloche, all taken directly from the standard repertory of Antioch at the time. The smaller figure panels represent masks, or rather heads, isolated against a white ground (figure 185). Parallels can be found for these too at Antioch, and some of the masks are clearly identified as belonging in the Dionysiac repertory: Pan, Silenus, a wreathed maenad. The larger panels, however, are different from anything found in the Roman world. They contain full-length female figures: dancers, musicians, garland-weavers and bearers of bouquets, figures surely taken from Sassanian court ritual (figures 186, 187). The style too is much more formal and less naturalistic than that of the masks, and suggests that different models are being followed. It seems safe to attribute the execution of these mosaics to captive Syrian craftsmen, since the art form is alien to the Iranian world. For the less important parts they appear to have followed their own patterns, but for the principal figures we must assume that they were given local models to reproduce, and were subjected to close supervision. The result is a strange hybrid of the two traditions.

²⁸ R. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Châpaur, Bichâpour II, Les mosaïques sassanides* (Paris 1956), esp. 37–75; H. von Gall, 'Die Mosaiken von Bishapur und ihre Beziehung zu den Triumphreliefs des Shapur I', *AMIran*, N.F.4, 1971, 193–205, pls. 31–4; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 149–52, pl. IV. Fragments of mosaic also in a courtyard: Ghirshman, *ibid.*, 77–88.



185 Bishapur, palace of Sapor, panel with Dionysiac heads. 1.06 m × 0.31 m. After AD 260.



186 Bishapur, palace of Sapor, Harpist. Panel 0.64 m × 0.85 m. After AD 260.



187 Bishapur, palace of Sapor, Woman with garland. Panel 0.58 m × 0.78 m. After AD 260.

IV

The turning-point in the development of the eastern mosaics took place at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries AD. In ornamental style the decisive change occurred somewhat earlier, with the widespread adoption of the rainbow style; elements of this had been present since the second century, but by the mid-fourth it had expanded to cover large areas. However these areas frequently framed figured panels, large or small, conceived as pictures on the floor with a unified theme and their own, more-or-less three-dimensional space. The Hellenistic tradition of the picture mosaic had persisted in this region, despite all the changes in the way it was carried out, long after it had been abandoned in many other parts of the Roman world; it disappeared now, never to return. With it went the traditional mythological

repertory, at least as the main source of figured material, although occasional items from it recur at a surprisingly late date. In its place are found new systems of decoration and composition, which treat the floor as a two-dimensional surface, to be covered with often repetitive carpet-like patterns. Figured motifs, when they occur in the new systems, are handled in a new way, and usually subordinate to the overall design.²⁹

The new tendencies coincided with the enormous growth in demand for the decoration of a new type of building. From the late fourth century onwards Christian churches were constructed in increasing numbers all through the Near East, and were frequently paved with mosaics. This opened a new source of patronage, which made different demands from those of private house-owners, and the mosaic workshops were evidently compelled to adjust their repertory accordingly. The submergence of the mythological repertory is doubtless to be attributed in part to the predominance of Christian patronage at this time, and to the changed religious climate which made fidelity to pagan traditions no longer safe. The taste for endlessly repetitive carpet-patterns may also be due to the architectural forms of the new buildings, which offered long unbroken spaces to be covered.

²⁹ For this whole development see Lavin, 'Hunting mosaics'; E. Kitzinger, 'Stylistic developments in pavement mosaics in the Greek East from the age of Constantine to the age of Justinian', *CMGR* 1, 341–52, figs. 1–20; and especially J. Balty, 'Les mosaïques de Syrie au Ve siècle et leur répertoire', *Byzantion* 54, 1984, 437–68, pls. 1–xvi (= *Proche-Orient* 87–109), to whom the following section is heavily indebted.

Many of these church mosaics contain inscriptions giving their date of dedication, which provide invaluable points of comparison for the overall evolution. Secular building also continued, especially in the big cities such as Antioch and Apamea; these mosaics use the same ornamental repertory and compositional schemes as those of the churches, although the figured repertory is wider in secular contexts. This present section will follow the new developments mainly in northern Syria from the late fourth century onwards, in both secular and ecclesiastical buildings.³⁰ More strictly ecclesiastical developments will be treated in the next chapter, in the discussion of the churches of Palestine and Transjordan, which at first have much in common with those of Syria.

In the second half of the fourth century AD a new style of geometric mosaic became popular, based on the principle of the repetitive carpet-like pattern which covered wide areas without interruption. Rainbow-style ornament was used extensively to fill compartments, the rainbow cable was one of the favourite motifs to outline the design (along with guilloche and wavy ribbon), and contrasts of uniformly coloured areas also appeared with increasing frequency. Elements in perspective did not totally disappear, but were confined to small filling motifs which would not disturb the two-dimensional character of the whole. These characteristics are clearly evident in the mosaics of the Qaousiye (Kaoussie) church at Antioch, dated by inscription to AD 387.³¹ The arms of the cruciform church were covered with geometric carpets of the type described above; the northern arm, the best preserved, has an oblique grid of maeander within a broad border, which covers the whole space without interruption, and encloses squares all filled with different versions of rainbow pattern (figure 188). While the decoration here is rigorously aniconic, other compositions of this period or a little later tentatively introduced isolated figured elements, vegetal or animal, into the compartments of the design. Thus in the church of Khirbet Mouqa, near Apamea, dated by inscription to 394/5, the mosaics of the nave have patterns of interlooping bands, forming compartments which contain birds, plants and *craters*.³² This tendency increased in the fifth century, as did the use of



188 Antioch, Qaousiye church, north aisle. 11 m × 24.25 m. AD 387.

looped and interlaced bands, not only for borders but to cover the main area of the floor. In secular buildings of the fifth century human figures were introduced into such designs, principally in the form of personifications; these often embody qualities closely associated with the building, as well as more familiar abstract ideas. Thus *Apolausis*, enjoyment, appears in a bath at Antioch, while *Ananeosis*, renewal, on another Antioch mosaic probably commemorates the actual restoration of the building, perhaps also with the implication of a more metaphorical renewal. Both personifications are shown as busts against a white ground, occupying a panel or medallion which interrupts an otherwise continuous geometric carpet-pattern³³ (figure 189).

The second important development of this period is a new type of vegetal-based design, which may be called a floral carpet.³⁴ It takes two main forms. The first is based on a pattern which had been in use, mainly for minor areas, through most of the history of the Antioch mosaics: a trellis, or simple grid of oblique lines. This is now vegetalised, its trace outlined by stylised floral elements, normally miniature rose-petals. The spaces thus formed are usually filled with stylised rosettes, though occasionally more complex and varied motifs may be introduced. A very effective example of the simpler form is the mosaic of the Green Carpet at Antioch, named from the unusual green ground against which the floral-trellis is set (plate

³⁰ For church mosaics in Syria and Lebanon see Donceel-Voûte, esp. 444–89; also Donceel-Voûte, 'Le Ve siècle dans les mosaïques syriennes', *CMGR* 14, 205–10, pls. CXIX–CXXVI.

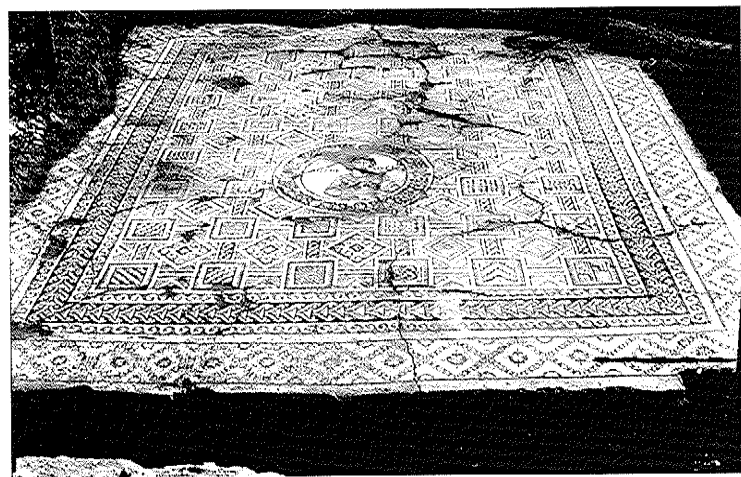
³¹ Levi AMP 283–5, 423–5, pls. CXIII–CXV; J. Lassus, 'L'église cruciforme' in R. Stillwell ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* 11, *The Excavations 1933–1936* (Princeton 1938), 5–44; identified as the *martyrion* of St.

Babylas by G. Downey, *ibid.* 45–8; Donceel-Voûte 21–31.

³² J. Ch. Balty, K. Chéhadé, W. van Rengen, *Mosaïques de l'église de Herbet Mûqa (Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie, Miscellanea 4, Brussels 1969)*; Donceel-Voûte 159–67.

³³ *Apolausis*: Levi AMP 304–6, pl. LXVII; *Ananeosis*: *ibid.* 320–1, pl. LXXIII.

³⁴ Cf. Balty, *Proche-Orient* 97–100; Donceel-Voûte 456–8.



189 Antioch, mosaic with bust of *Ananeosis* at centre of geometric carpet-pattern. 7 m × 8 m. Fifth century AD.

30). In the more elaborate mosaic of the Striding Lion, the spaces of the trellis are occupied by birds, fruit, fish, and one or two animals, and a much larger lion is superimposed across a wide area of the centre of the grid³⁵ (figure 190). An alternative decorative system is known as the *semis*, where floral motifs are strewn over the ground without formal framework. The floral elements may be isolated rose petals, rosettes, or rosebuds with sprays of leaves at their base, frequently in alternating rows; the white ground is often set to form imbrication designs around the florets. The decorative effect which a mosaic of this type could achieve is well demonstrated by the mosaic of the Phoenix at Daphne³⁶ (figures 191, 192). This covered a huge area, probably unroofed. A border showed pairs of rams' heads, supported on pairs of beribboned wings: a motif of Sassanian origin, discussed below. The whole central field is covered by a *semis* of rows of rosebuds, on a white ground set in imbrications around them; there were originally over 7,500 of these rosebuds. At the centre, a single figured motif breaks the design: it is almost two metres high, but dwarfed by the monotonous carpet around it. A phoenix stands on a mound of rock; rays of pinkish light radiate from its nimbled head across adjacent areas of the pavement, subtly changing the colour of the rosebuds as they pass over them. A coin of Theodosius II (408–50) found beneath the mosaic gives it a *terminus post quem*; repairs to the border at one point may have been occasioned by the earthquake of AD 526, and a date around AD 500 seems the most likely.

³⁵ Green Carpet: Levi AMP 315–16, 469–70, pl.cxxviii; Striding Lion: *ibid.* 321–3, pl.lxxiv.

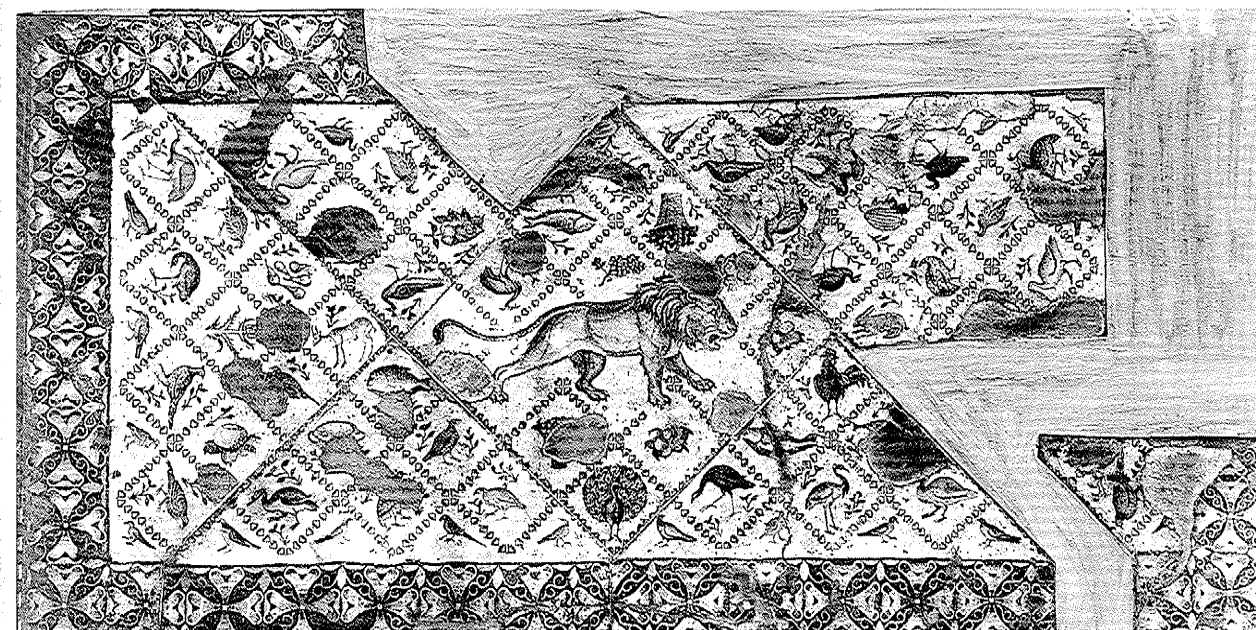
³⁶ Levi AMP 351–5, pls.lxxxiii, cxxxiv; J. Lassus, 'La mosaïque du Phénix provenant des fouilles d'Antioche', *Mon Piot* 36, 1938, 81–122, pl.v; Baratte, *Louvre* 92–7, no.44, figs.86–93.

³⁷ Cf. D.N. Wilber, 'Iranian motifs in Syrian art', *Bulletin of the*

These two forms of floral carpet made their appearance in the first half of the fifth century. They provided a decorative formula, admirably suited for execution in mosaic, which was widely exploited in the east for the next two hundred years, alone or in combination with other decorative schemes. Their resemblance to textile patterns raises the question of their possible derivation from oriental carpets, and more broadly, of the influence of oriental, specifically Sassanian art on this stage of the evolution of mosaic in Syria. Since few textiles survive from this period, the question of derivation is difficult; and several of the new developments can be seen as the culmination of an internal evolution within the art of mosaic itself, sometimes paralleled elsewhere in the empire. Nevertheless, oriental influences can also be seen on these Syrian mosaics. Certain motifs of undisputed Sassanian origin appear in the repertory at this point.³⁷ They include the pairs of rams' heads confronted above beribboned wings that form the border of the Phoenix mosaic, a combination of motifs emblematic of Sassanian royalty. Typical also is the parrot wearing a ribbon, the Persian *pativ*, around its neck, which occurs on several floors at Antioch, including one where identical rows of such birds are repeated across the floor. Other animals wear similar ribbons, among them a lion that appears at the centre of a floral carpet-mosaic.³⁸ These motifs might have been conveyed to Syria by Sassanian silver vessels or other portable objects, but their use in combination with the carpet-like floral patterns makes it most likely that textiles were the intermediaries. The beribboned parrot mosaic, for instance, looks like a direct transposition of a woven repeating pattern. It must be stressed, however, that such borrowings should not be seen as evidence for a profound orientalisation of the whole art of mosaic in late Roman and early Byzantine Syria, as was once thought. The floral carpet-mosaics, and the motifs that go with them, are only one aspect of more profound changes, from three-dimensional framed 'picture' to two-dimensional 'carpet', from clearly delineated ornamental designs to surfaces defined by colour: changes which had already been anticipated in many other parts of the empire. The oriental textiles which must have introduced

American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology 5, 1937, 22–6; Lassus, *ibid.*, 117–21.

³⁸ Rams' heads: Levi AMP 350, pls.lxxxiii, cxxxiv; and Phoenix mosaic, above, n.36. Beribboned parrots: *ibid.* 358, pl.lxxxv–d. Beribboned lion: *ibid.* 313–15, pl.lxxb–c.



190 Antioch, mosaic of Striding Lion. Baltimore Museum of Art no.37.139. 8.6 m × 4.53 m. Fifth century AD.

the new motifs were attuned to the new aesthetic: they did not create it.³⁹

V

A third main source of material in the fifth century was the animal repertory; this too was handled in a manner very different from previously. Instead of being framed in distinct compartments, rows of animals are now spread freely over the surface to be decorated, forming a figured carpet. They may stand or walk peacefully, without interaction, or they may form groups of pursuit and capture, carnivores grappling with their prey. Limited landscape elements, in the form of trees, bushes, or groundlines, may be present, but serve a predominantly decorative purpose, to punctuate and give rhythm to a scene. Alternatively the ground may be neutral, not only white but even with a floral *semis* of the type discussed above.

Animal pavements of this type apparently became popular around the middle of the fifth century, and were widespread thereafter. At Seleucia, the port of Antioch, a frieze of this sort covered the ambulatories of a quatrefoil church (the so-called Martyrion), probably destroyed by the earthquake of AD 526 (figure 193). The animals walk in two main rows, one facing to either side of the ambula-

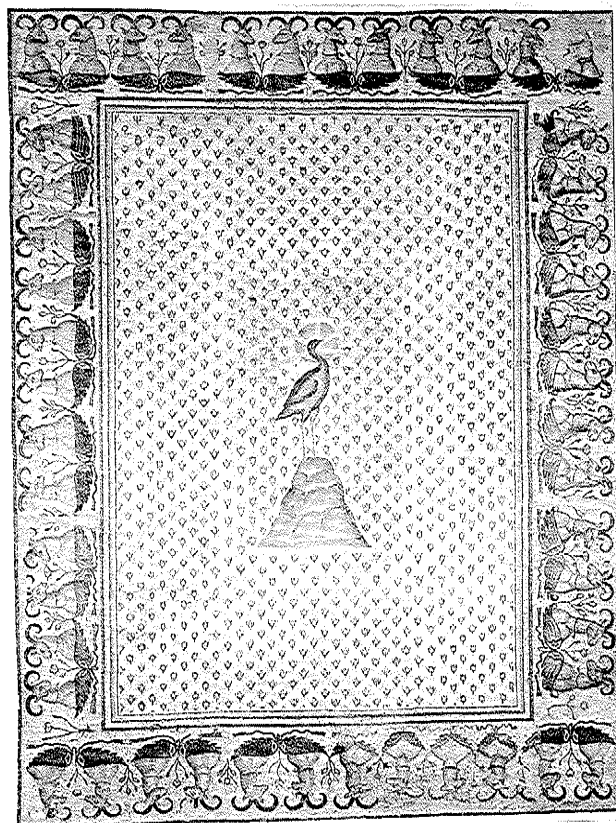
³⁹ Cf. A. Gonosová, 'The formation and sources of early Byzantine floral semis and floral diaper patterns reexamined', *DOP* 41, 1987, 227–37. For older theories of eastern influences, cf. C.R. Morey, *The Mosaics of Antioch* (London/New York/Toronto 1938), 41–8; C. Hopkins, *JNES* 7, 1948, 91–7 (review of Levi, AMP).



191 Antioch (Daphne), House of the Phoenix, Phoenix mosaic *in situ*. Originally 10.20 m × 12.35 m. c. AD 500.

tory, with smaller animals and birds in the centre; trees and bushes punctuate the processions, but there is no formal division nor consistent setting.⁴⁰ One of the advantages of such pavements was that they could be adapted freely to difficult spaces, like the curving sides of a quatrefoil. Characteristic in this regard are the mosaics, dated by inscription to AD 469, which paved the porticoes

⁴⁰ Levi AMP 359–63, pls.lxxxvii–lxxxix, clxxv–clxxvii; W. Campbell, 'The Martyrion at Seleucia Pieria', in R. Stillwell ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes III, The Excavations of 1937–1939* (Princeton 1941), 35–54; *ibid.* 214–19, no.180, pls.90–2; Donceel-Voûte 290–8.



192 Antioch (Daphne), Phoenix mosaic, after restoration. Musée du Louvre MA 3442, Paris. Reduced to 4.25 m × 6 m. c.500 AD.

of the Great Colonnade at Apamea for over one hundred metres of its length.⁴¹ In two long carpets, subdivided at irregular intervals into smaller panels, there unfolds a succession of animals alone or in groups, some set amidst scattered landscape elements, others standing out against an abstract *semis* of roses. At least two scenes taken from daily life occur among these, a camel caravan, and a big water wheel of the type called a *noria*, still found in the Orontes valley. Genre subjects taken from local life had been almost unknown on earlier mosaics of the region, but appear increasingly from this time on. Numerous teams of workmen undoubtedly worked on different sections of the portico mosaics, contributing to their lack of inner coherence; but they illustrate well the flexibility of subjects of this type.

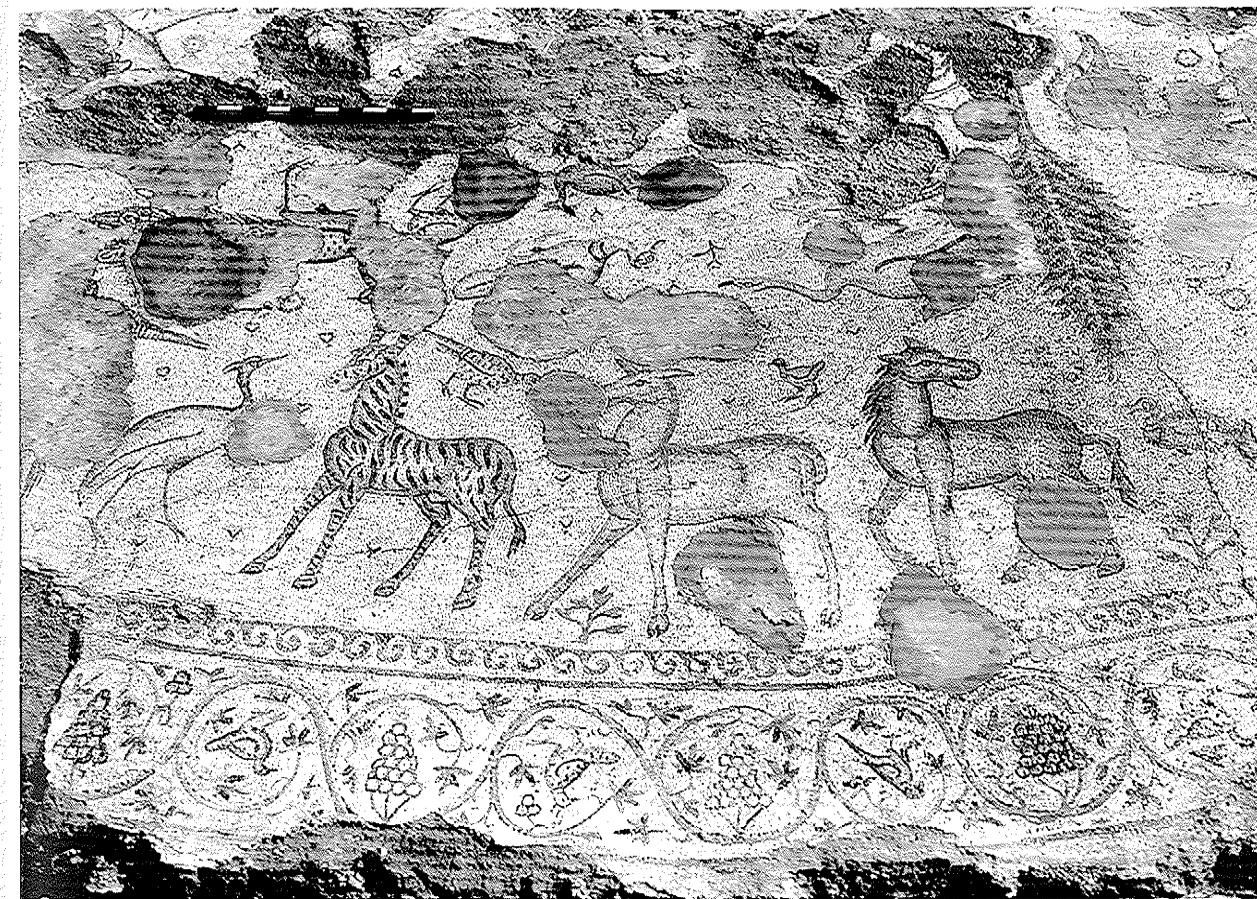
The two churches excavated at the village of Huarte,

about 15 km. from Apamea, exemplify a more sophisticated use of animal pavements. An earlier church beneath had predominantly geometric pavements; a narthex and baptistery, added some time in the course of the fifth century, had introduced animal scenes. At the end of the fifth century two new churches were built: one dedicated by Photios, archbishop of Apamea, in AD 483, the other, consecrated to the archangel Michael, probably completed in 487/8 (or 501/2), though the full date is missing.⁴² The entire nave and north aisle of the Photios basilica are occupied by animal carpets, set against a ground of *semis* of rosettes; the animals pursue and attack one another, or are arranged heraldically among trees. In the Michaelion a similar animal carpet in the nave is given a new sense, adapted to the ecclesiastical setting: at the centre Adam sits enthroned, occupied in giving names to the animals who stand peacefully around him like the beasts in scenes of Orpheus. The aisles have similar carpets, with combats and pursuits of animals. At the end of the north aisle is a slightly incongruous genre scene: a man named as Georgi<o>s son of Klaudios leads a pair of mules, who carry between them an object on a litter, perhaps a reliquary containing relics transported to the adjacent *martyrion*.⁴³ Another theme appearing at Huarte which was to be increasingly common in the following century is the vine scroll, not as a border but covering wider areas and enclosing animals and birds; it decorates the apses of the two churches and the *martyrion*.

Linked with the fashion for animal pavements is the hunting scene, which also enjoyed a return to favour around the middle of the fifth century. A series of such scenes decorated wealthy houses at Antioch; best known are the Megalopsychia Hunt from the Yakto Complex at Daphne, dated on internal grounds to the 450s or 460s AD, and the Worcester Hunt, stylistically somewhat later.⁴⁴ The Megalopsychia mosaic demonstrates well the changes that had taken place since the mosaics of the Constantinian Villa at Antioch a little more than a hundred years earlier. A unified composition now covers a large area (figure 194). The figures are spread freely around the four sides of a square; a central focus is given

teer Georgi<o>s (perhaps the same man mentioned as donor, among others, in the immediately adjacent inscription), and the litter simply identifies his occupation.

⁴¹ C. Dulière, *Mosaïques des portiques de la Grande Colonnade (Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie. Miscellanea 3, Brussels 1974)*.
⁴² P. and M.T. Canivet, 'L'ensemble ecclésiastique de Huarte d'Apamène (Syrie)', *Syria* 56, 1979, 65–98; Canivet and Canivet, *Huarte. Sanctuaire chrétien d'Apamène (IVe–VIe S.)* (Paris 1987), esp. 187–261; Donceel-Voûte 90–116.
⁴³ However Donceel-Voûte 106–9 thinks the emphasis is on the mule-



193 Antioch (Seleucia), Quatrefoil church (so-called Martyrion), animal carpet. Probably second half of the fifth century AD.

by a medallion with the bust of *Megalopsychia*, magnanimity or generosity, distributing pieces of gold. Six hunters are spearing large beasts, arranged in confronted pairs on the long sides, in single groups on the short. Other beasts fill the space around the central medallion. Limited landscape elements punctuate the scene, with trees set on the diagonals and in the centre of each side; but the composition is essentially two-dimensional, and the white background is set in an imbrication pattern. The hunters bear mythological names, Meleagros, Adonis, Narkissos, Tiresias, Akteon, Hippolytos; but they wear contemporary costume, and are clearly amphitheatre *venatores*. The names may be professional arena names, or faint survivals of the tradition of mythological hunters; only Adonis with his boar preserves also some trace of an iconographical survival. Almost identical schemata are followed for the hunters, four facing to the right, two in three-quarter back view to the left. Considerable anatomical distortions are perceptible in the figures, but they convey a lively sense of movement; and though the humans are two-dimensional, the animals are well modelled, with broad bands of light and shade emphasising the contours. The overall effect,

however, is one of decorative schematisation, with little reference to the natural form.

Surrounding the Megalopsychia Hunt is a remarkable border of topographical scenes (figure 195). It presents a series of buildings, whose names are given (along the best-preserved side) by inscriptions, allowing the scene to be identified as a representation of the town of Daphne and of Antioch itself.⁴⁵ They further give, indirectly, the date of the mosaic: one building is named as the private bath of Ardabur, who held high rank (*magister militum per Orientem*) in the 450s, and resided in Antioch until about the 460s. The buildings include the famous spring of Daphne, Kastalia, and its fountain-house, the Olympic stadium, public buildings and statues, as well as private houses with the names of their owners. Figures, often as tall as the buildings, move around them; small genre scenes occur, such as the artisans working before their shops and men playing dice in front of a tavern. Buildings are rendered according to a series of schematic formulae,

⁴⁵ J. Lassus, 'Antioche en 459, d'après la mosaïque de Yakto', in J. Balty ed., *Actes du Colloque Apamée de Syrie, Bilan de recherches archéologiques 1965–1968* (Brussels 1969), 137–47, pls. LXIII–LXVI, with refs.



194 Antioch, Yakto complex, Megalopsychia mosaic, drawing. 7 m × 7.20 m. Probably AD 450–469.



195 Antioch, Yakto complex, Megalopsychia mosaic, detail of topographical border.

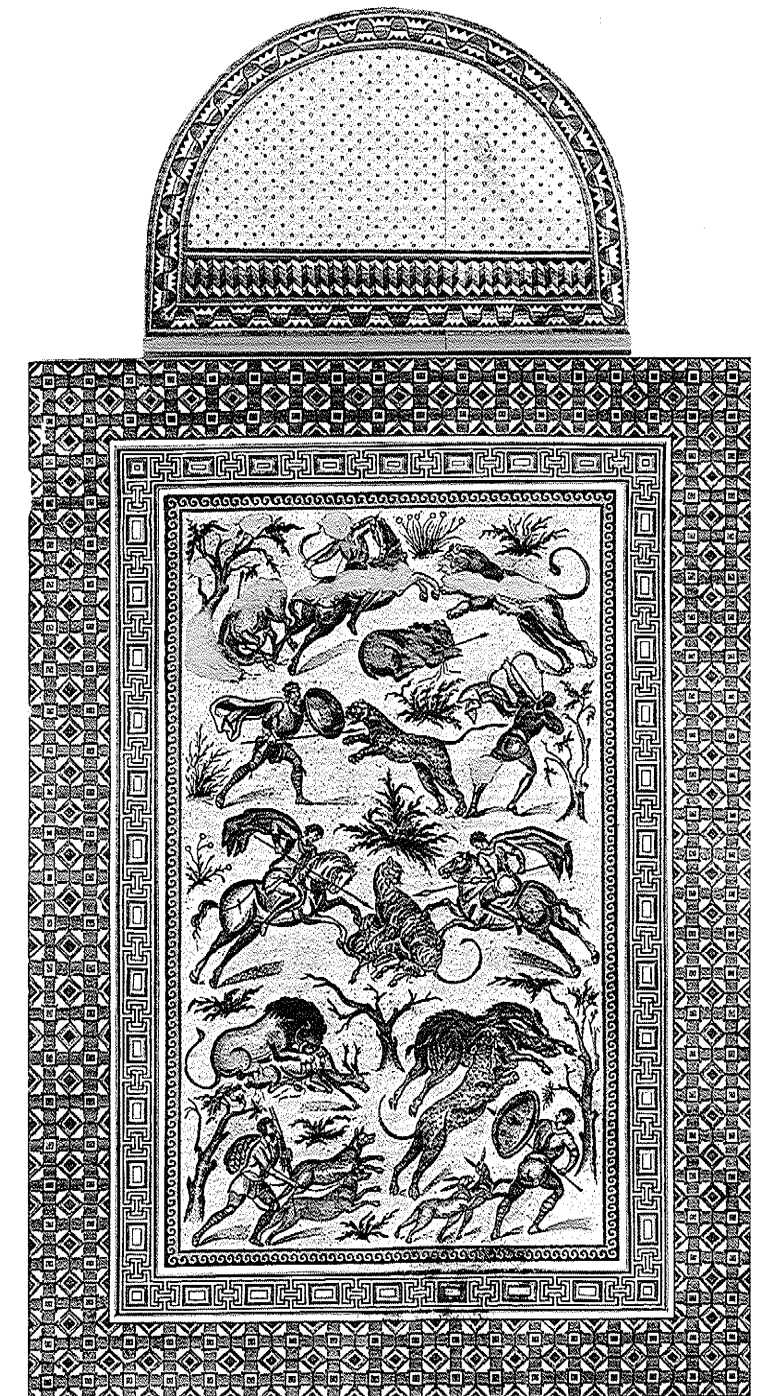
dissolved into the most significant constituent parts and using multiple perspective; both features are characteristic of late antique architectural rendering.

The Megalopsychia mosaic is clearly designed as a record of the munificence of the owner of the house. He had evidently given games to his city; the border may also imply, as Lassus has suggested, further benefactions, perhaps in consequence of the earthquake which damaged the city in 458. The taste for topographical presentation, combined here with lively scenes from contemporary city life, is almost unique in this context, though topographical representations of towns will be seen again on the church mosaics from Jordan.⁴⁶

Hunting mosaics are found also at Apamea; the best known, now in Brussels, came from a house called the 'Triclinos building'⁴⁷ (figures 196, 197). It decorated a huge apsidal room; a single panel, oriented to be seen from the entrance, occupied the greater part of the room, with a broad geometric carpet acting as outer border. The hunting scenes are arranged in five approximate registers, though without formal divisions. The hunters are on foot and horseback, attacking a variety of creatures: lion, leopard, tiger, boar, stag; beasts also attack one another. There is no narrative succession of events, indeed various episodes are conflated; but visual links tie the mosaic together, for instance an archer who aims an arrow at a lion in the register above. The figures cast shadows, although there are no regular groundlines, and a sense of recession is evoked by the trees and plants, and above all by the foreshortened poses of the figures; but the background is plain white, set in an imbrication pattern. Technically, the mosaic is in many ways superior to the other hunting pavements. The figures are very classical, with complicated poses deliberately exaggerated to convey movement, but without the inorganic distortions seen in the Antioch hunters. Both men and beasts are designed with a sense of volume, achieved both by the use of stripes of light and shade, and by the setting of the tesserae in worklines, to follow the contours of a part of the body. The plants are impressionistic clumps of foliage. The mosaic, in short, seems to hold a balance between

⁴⁶ Below, ch. 11, ns. 30–6. For the sense of the Megalopsychia mosaic see also W. Raack, *Modernisierte Mythen. Zum Umgang der Spätantike mit klassischen Bildthemen* (Stuttgart 1992), 74–5, 143–4.

⁴⁷ J. Balty, *La grande mosaïque de chasse du Triclinos (Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie, Miscellanea 2, Brussels 1969)*. The tesserae average 1 cm square overall, much smaller and more varied in the figures (150–250 per square dm); no glass is used.



196 Apamea, Triclinos building, mosaic of Hunt. Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Brussels. Figured panel 4.87 m × 8.48 m. Probably mid-fifth to early sixth century AD.



197 Apamea, Triclinos building, mosaic of Hunt, detail.

natural form and decorative schematism, both in composition and in individual forms. In this respect, it has few parallels; it has been compared to the mosaic of the Great Palace at Constantinople, itself unique.⁴⁸

The dating of the Apamea Hunt and its place in the evolution of the Syrian hunting mosaics are problematic. An inscription on the threshold gives the date AD 539 for the restoration of the *triclinos*, clearly the room itself, but J. Balty has shown that the inscription is not homogeneous with the mosaic, and must refer to a later restoration: it provides only a *terminus ante quem*. The exceptional quality of the mosaic makes it difficult to date on stylistic grounds; a great gap, in quality and conception, separates it from another mosaic in the same building showing hunting Amazons.⁴⁹ It should be seen as the work of an unusually expert atelier, perhaps imported from a more cosmopolitan centre, which local workmen were to follow in a more provincial style; a date any time after the mid-fifth century seems possible.⁵⁰

One final mythological mosaic is probably to be placed in the sixth century; it comes from Sarrin in the remote province of Osrhoene, beyond the Euphrates.⁵¹ The four sides of a peristyle were decorated with six mythological scenes; regrettably nothing is known of the building to

which it belonged. Two longer panels show, respectively, Artemis the huntress with her prey, amid hunting scenes, and the cortège of Dionysus with his *thiasos* (figure 198). Four shorter panels contain the Triumph of Marine Aphrodite; Europa and the Bull; the rape of Auge by Heracles; and (probably) Dido and Aeneas; borders contain scrolls with hunters, and Nilotic scenes. There is no sign of lack of familiarity with the myths, unlike several of the late mythological scenes just considered which were to some extent 'de-mythologised'; deities and heroes appear in their appropriate context. The Dionysiac scene in particular resembles several other Dionysiac monuments dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, in various media, which appear to contain allusions to actual cult practice and Dionysiac initiation. This suggests that the scene, and therefore the other mythological scenes as well, are not just harmless pieces of traditional material, which might be chosen by Christian patrons to display their learning, but documents of a paganism which was still far from dead. Balty has drawn attention to the survival of a pagan community at Carrhae (Harrân) in the vicinity, which is attested several centuries later even than the sixth century; the mosaic too is a monument to the extraordinary vitality of paganism on the remote borders of the empire.

The production of mosaics in Antioch ended with the Persian sack of AD 540; the latest datable mosaic in Apamea, from the cathedral, belongs to the 530s. Elsewhere in the region churches continued to be constructed and decorated; several are dated during the course of the sixth century, fewer in the seventh. Little new is added in this period; most of the compositions in favour in the previous century continue, including floral *semis*, interlooped patterns, vine scrolls, and animal carpets, these last often with the characteristics of a rather naïve popular art. The latest datable mosaics in Syria are those of the church of St George at Deir el-'Adas (south of Damascus); an inscription gives the date 722, during the rule of the Umayyad dynasty.⁵² The main pre-

for the date; Balty places it between the end of the fifth and the mid-sixth century, with the closest parallels perhaps in the mid-sixth (83-5). For the identification as Dido and Aeneas, see review of Balty by H. Lavagne, *BullAIEMA* 14, 1993, 264-6; for the Dionysiac scene, J. Balty, 'Notes d'iconographie dionysiaque: la mosaïque de Sarrin (Osrhoène)', *MEFRA* 103, 1991, 19-33 (= *Proche-Orient* 255-62).

⁵² Donceel-Voûte 45-54. For the general characteristics of the mosaics of this period, see *ibid.* 461-4; Donceel-Voûte, 'Syro-Phoenician mosaics of the 6th century', *CMGR* v, 2, 88-100. For mosaics in Jordan datable after the Arab conquest (AD 636), see below, ch. 11, sections IV and V.



198 Sarrin, Dionysiac panel from mythological mosaic, detail showing Silenus and nurse. Aleppo Museum (lower portion of figures restored). Height of panel c.1.51 m. Probably first half to mid-sixth century AD.

served portion is the pavement of the nave, which has a figured carpet arranged in three approximate registers (figure 199). Two have hunting scenes, one a scene of a fowler and a vintager among vines draped over palm trees. A figured outer border survives only at the east end, where a man labelled in Greek Mouchasos the camel-driver (*kamilari<o>s*) leads a caravan of four laden dromedaries; the inscription may suggest that he is a donor of the mosaic. The figures are lively, though drawn (especially the humans) with a certain naïveté; the ornaments are those in use for the previous two hundred years, with looped designs most prominent among them. The mosaic conjures up a vivid image of the culture of southern Syria under its Moslem rulers, with the agriculture of the oasis, the hunts that took place beyond it, and the vital importance of the camel-trade. As in the contemporary mosaics of the Transjordanian area, both Christian and Moslem, much survives from the traditional repertory, yet nevertheless it looks forward to a new age.



199 Deir el-'Adas, church of St George, panel from nave with camel-driver. Bosra Castle. AD 722.

⁴⁸ Below, ch. 13, n. 36.

⁴⁹ C. Dulière, *La mosaïque des Amazones (Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie, Miscellanea 1, Brussels 1968)*, suggesting a date in the second half of the fifth century.

⁵⁰ Balty, *La grande mosaïque* (cit. n. 47), 26-35; Balty, *Syrie* 104-8, pls. 47-9; Balty, *Proche-Orient* 23-4, 78-9. In her later work she accepts a *terminus post quem* of the mid-fifth century, but thinks that its exceptional character makes it impossible to date it more precisely.

⁵¹ J. Balty, *La mosaïque de Sarrin (Osrhoène) (Inventaire des mosaïques antiques de Syrie 1, Paris 1990)*. There is no archaeological evidence

Bibliography

Balty, *Syrie*; Balty, *ANRW*; Balty, *Proche-Orient*; Levi, *AMP*; Donceel-Voûte. A corpus of the mosaics of modern Lebanon is given by M. Chéhab, *Mosaïques du Liban* (*Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 14, Paris 1957/8). The first volume of the *Inventaire des Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* consists of J. Balty's publication of the mosaic of Sarrin, *La mosaïque de Sarrin* (cit. above n.51).

Palestine and Transjordan



I

The mosaics produced in Palestine reflect the peculiar history of the area. Only a comparatively small number have been found in secular contexts; the great majority are associated with one of the religions that have dominated the region. Mosaic was evidently known here in the late Hellenistic period, but the earlier centuries of the Empire are only sparsely represented, in part because of the troubles of Judaea under Roman rule. However from the fourth century AD onwards mosaics were used very extensively to decorate the sacred buildings of both Jews and Christians. On both banks of the Jordan, but especially in the east, the tradition continued without a break until a late date; the latest mosaics known here belong to the eighth century, long after the Arab conquests of the 630s. Their use not only continued in Christian churches, but was also adopted by the Moslem conquerors. Moreover a few late secular buildings in this region contain mosaics which show the remarkable persistence of traditional pagan imagery. This chapter, therefore, differs from most of its predecessors in being mainly concerned with the use made of mosaics in the service of the differing religions. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all at times rejected figured imagery, at least in religious contexts. This led to the rich development of ornamental designs, and sometimes to the destruction of earlier figurative monuments. But when the various religions accepted figured designs there can be a surprising overlap of imagery between them.

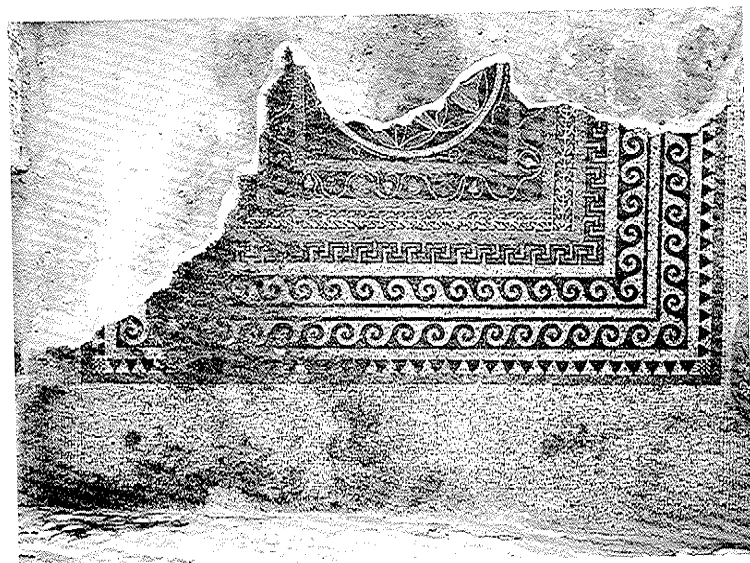
In the last two centuries BC Hellenistic traditions had a strong impact. Excavations at the town of Tel Anafa, in Israel, have revealed thousands of tiny fragments dating from the end of the second and first quarter of the first century BC. The tesserae are only a few millimetres

square, in several colours of stone and glass; most fragments are plain white, with black borders, but others have patterns and floral designs and some may be figured. In a bathing room in a building dated to the late second century BC a more complete mosaic has an irregular chequer of black and white tesserae, similar to some at Delos.¹

More substantial are a series of pavements belonging to buildings erected by Herod the Great in Palestine in the late first century BC. His Western Palace at Masada contained three mosaics of Hellenistic tradition, all aniconic in deference to Jewish sensibility. About one third is preserved of the largest, from *Oecus* 456 (figure 200). A central rosette composed of intersecting circles on a dark ground, with palmettes in the spandrels beyond, is surrounded by fifteen borders, among them a fine scroll with vine and ivy leaves, also on a dark ground, which uses tesserae smaller than the rest. The colours are black, white, red, brown, with blue and green used for special effects. The multiplicity of borders, the use of a dark ground, the small tesserae in specific parts, and many of the individual motifs, can be paralleled at Delos. Other rooms in the Northern Palace and Bath Building at Masada show quite a different style of mosaic: simple black-and-white designs, such as a nest of hexagons within plain black frames. These last, like much else in Herod's architecture, show the influence of his Italophile tastes, and must have been executed by workmen imported from Italy; the polychrome mosaics, on the other hand, attest to the existence of a local, Hellenistic-derived tradition.² Further Herodian mosaics of both types have been found at the Herodion and in the palaces at Jericho (where a simple four-colour design from the earlier Hasmonean period has also been found); floors of private houses in Jerusalem from this period belong to the

¹ Fragments: S. Weinberg, 'Tel Anafa: the Hellenistic Town', *IEJ* 21, 1971, 97-8; *id.*, *MUSE* 3, 1969, 21-3; 5, 1971, 11-13; 6, 1972, 9, fig.5; 8, 1974, 20, fig.3c; Ovadia, *Israel* 137, no.234. Chequer-pattern: S. Herbert, *Tel Anafa* 1, i-ii. *Final Report on Ten Years of Excavation at a Hellenistic and Roman Settlement in Northern Israel* (*JRA* suppl.10, Ann Arbor 1994), 64-5, pls.38, 40; a *terminus ad or post quem* is given by a coin of 128-125 BC.

² G. Foerster, *Masada V. The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963-1965. Final Report: Art and Architecture* (Jerusalem 1995), 140-58, figs.252-64, col.pls.xiii-xv. Other rooms in the Bath Building showed traces of pavements of *opus sectile*, also an Italian fashion: *ibid.* 158-61.



200 Masada, Western Palace, Oecus 456, Herodian mosaic. W. 3.50 m. Late first century BC.

same Hellenistic tradition, with geometric designs and rosettes in three or four colours.³

During the following three centuries conditions were unsettled, and comparatively little has survived. Nevertheless sporadic finds illustrate the use of mosaic at least in the second and third centuries AD. Some have mythological subjects which reflect the Hellenisation of the region under Roman rule. One recent find at Sepphoris Diocaesarea in Galilee, dated to the first half of the third century, equals in quality any work found in the main Syrian cities⁴ (figure 201). It decorated a *triclinium*, with the U-shaped section for the couches marked out in black on white. Around the central part of the floor runs a broad border of acanthus scroll on a black ground, containing animals and hunting putti. It is closely related to similar scrolls found further north in Syria, and of unusually fine workmanship. In the centre of the short sides the scrolls frame two female busts, the better preserved of extraordinary delicacy. Within this border, a central panel with the Drinking Contest of Dionysus and Heracles (a subject seen twice in the Antioch mosaics) is surrounded by fourteen smaller panels with Dionysiac themes, identified by titles in Greek. They include familiar scenes of Dionysiac myth, such as his bath as a baby, his marriage to Ariadne, and his triumphal procession (*pompe*), while another, entitled 'drunkenness' (*methe*) shows Heracles

overcome by the aftereffects of the contest (plate 31). More unusual scenes seem to be related to cult practices: the 'bringers of gifts' (*dorophoroi*) or the 'flocks' (*poimnai*). The bar of the T is formed by three long panels in a frame imitating a perspective cornice; one was crudely restored in antiquity, the other two show processions carrying offerings of agricultural produce and cult objects. The craftsmanship is directly comparable to contemporary work in Antioch or Shahba-Philippopolis, with tesserae as small as two to three millimetres in the figures, and a wide range of colours and tones; glass tesserae supplement limestone. Its especial interest comes from the subject-matter, with the apparent link to the practices of cult associations; it is tempting to see it as decorating a dining-room designed for Dionysiac banquets. Even if this cannot be proved, the mosaic testifies to the vigour of pagan scenes in a city known at this date as a centre of Jewish learning.

II

It is the later religious buildings that give the region its distinctive character. From the reign of Constantine onwards the cult of the Holy Places led to the construction of enormous numbers of Christian churches; in Palestine itself the majority date from the late fourth to the sixth centuries AD. The mosaics with which they are decorated will be discussed in the following section together with those from the opposite side of the Jordan valley. In the same period Jewish synagogues began to be decorated with mosaic pavements, perhaps in emulation of the Christian churches. Some of these are purely symbolic, but others use figured decoration; the Jewish prohibition of figural representation had been relaxed, at least in some circles, to permit two-dimensional images.⁵ Some of the synagogue mosaics are very close to those of contemporary churches in composition and content, apart from the actual religious symbols included, and were presumably executed by the same workshops; others are more idiosyncratic.

(Winona Lake, Indiana 1992); Z. Weiss, R. Talgam, 'The Dionysiac mosaic floor of Sepphoris', *CMGR* vi, 231-7. For another recently found mosaic at Sepphoris, with Nilotic and hunting scenes, see below, n.17; for the synagogue, below, n.9.

⁵ Cf. J. Baumgarten, 'Art in the Synagogue: some Talmudic views', in J. Gutmann ed., *The Synagogue. Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture* (New York 1975), 79-89.

³ A. Ovadia, 'Mosaic pavements of the Herodian period in Israel', *CMGR* v, 67-76, with refs. Cf. also V. Corbo, 'L'Herodion di Gebal Fureidis', *LA* 13, 1962-3, 239-56, esp. figs.9, 16; E. Netzer, *IEJ* 23, 1973, 260, pl.72b (Jericho); Netzer, 'The Hasmonean and Herodian Winter Palaces at Jericho', *IEJ* 25, 1975, 89-100; N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Oxford 1984), 144-6, figs.150-1, 159-65. For *opus sectile* in the Herodian palace at Jericho, see below, ch.15, n.15.

⁴ Preliminary publications: E. Meyers, E. Netzer, C. Meyers, *Sepphoris*



201 Sepphoris, general view of *triclinium* with Dionysiac mosaic. 6.90 m × 9.20 m. First half of the third century AD.

One of the earliest and most remarkable examples is the lower synagogue at Hammath Tiberias on Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee), dated to the fourth century, probably the later part.⁶ An earlier (third-century) building beneath was also paved with mosaic, though only fragments remain. In the new building, the aisles were paved with geometric carpet-designs, while the nave contained three figured panels (figure 202). At the entrance, a pair of lions flank a panel with inscriptions giving the names of eight donors, in Greek. The central panel shows the circle of the zodiac, with the Sun-god in his chariot at the centre, and busts of the Seasons in the angles of an enclosing square. Seasons and zodiac signs are identified by their names in Hebrew. Finally, the panel at the end has an image of the Torah shrine containing the Ark of the Law, with a curtain draped in front, between two seven-branched candlesticks (*menorah*); further ritual objects, incense-shovels, palm-branches (*lulab*), citron-fruits (*ethrog*), and ram's horns (*shofar*) are placed

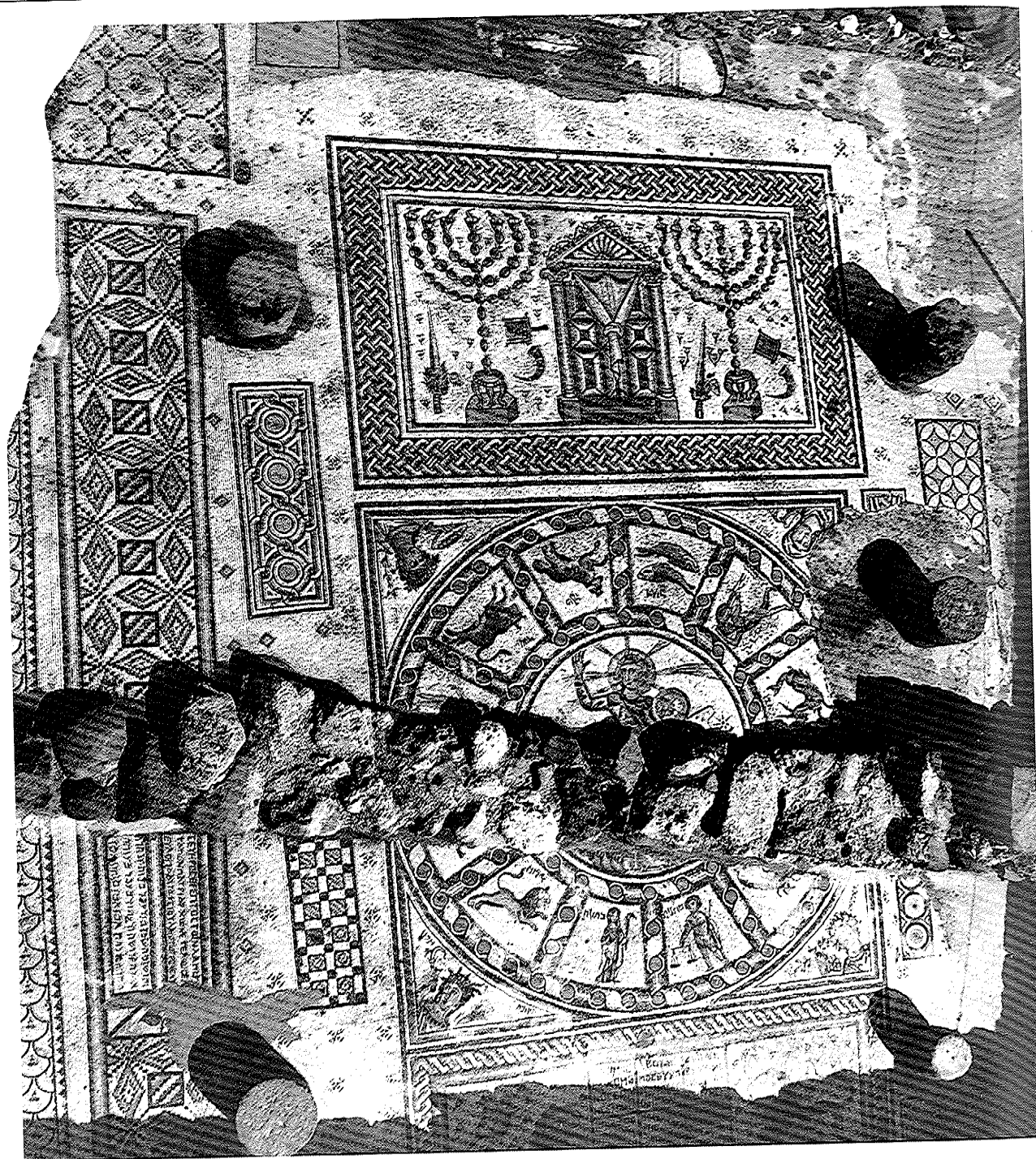
in the field. The Ark itself must have stood in the space immediately behind.

Various explanations have been advanced to account for the representation of the zodiac here and in other synagogues: for instance as a calendar to assist in the planning of the liturgical year, or as a symbol of cosmic forces.⁷ But despite accommodation of the theme to Jewish religious requirements, the classical, indeed pagan character of the whole remains striking. The Sun-god frontal in his chariot, with radiate nimbus and holding the globe, right hand raised in a gesture of power, is directly derived from the representations of Sol Invictus, the unconquered Sun, whose cult was especially favoured by emperors of the third and early fourth century. It does not look like a neutral image whose religious significance was outworn, however the worshippers in the synagogue may have regarded it. The signs of the zodiac are represented by life-like figures; of the humans, Libra, Aquarius, and the surviving twin of Gemini are nude. The symbolic

⁶ M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias. Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains* (Jerusalem 1983); Ovadia, *Israel* 63-5, no.87, pls.LXV-LXVIII, CLXXIX-CLXXXII. Dothan places the construction of the synagogue with the mosaics (Stratum IIa) in the last decades of the third or first quarter of the fourth century. But the geometric mosaics are incompatible with so early a dating. Features such as the advanced rainbow-style ornament, the tentative use of looped patterns, and the *semis* of rosebuds that forms a background to the panels with the lions and with the Torah shrine are more characteris-

tic of the last quarter of the fourth century. The synagogue was apparently destroyed early in the fifth century, but may have enjoyed only a short period of use.

⁷ M. Avi-Yonah, 'La mosaïque juive dans ses relations avec la mosaïque classique', *CMGR* 1, 326-8; Dothan, *ibid.*, 48-9, with refs; R. Hachlili, 'The zodiac in ancient Jewish art: representation and significance', *BASOR* 228, Dec.1977, 61-77; G. Guidoni Guidi, 'Le rappresentazioni dello zodiaco sui mosaici pavimentali del Vicino Oriente', *CMGR* III, 253-62.



202 Hammath Tiberias, synagogue, general view. Central panel 3.26 m × 3.30 m. Probably late fourth century AD.

panels are naturally more abstract; but they too are well composed and skilfully executed. Greek inscriptions give the names of donors, while an Aramaic inscription in the side aisle gives a generalised blessing; two inscriptions repeat the names of Severos, disciple (*threptos*) of the most illustrious patriarchs, and of Ioulios the supervisor

(*pronoetes*) as the most prominent donors. The upper levels of the community who were responsible for commissioning the synagogue and its decoration were evidently thoroughly Hellenised; they were also closely associated with the religious authorities resident in Tiberias. The mosaicist(s), however, were not necessarily



203 Beth Alpha, synagogue, panel with signs of zodiac. 3.75 m × 3.55 m. Probably AD 518–527.

Jewish, and may have been brought in from some larger centre.⁸

Several of the motifs from Hammath Tiberias are found in other synagogues, though seldom on mosaics of comparable naturalism.⁹ The circle of the zodiac, with

Helios the Sun-god at its centre and the Seasons in the spandrels, occurs again in the sixth-century synagogue at Beth Alpha, together with the Torah shrine between *menorahs*, other ritual objects, and a pair of lions (figure 203). A third panel, at the entrance, contains the Sacrifice

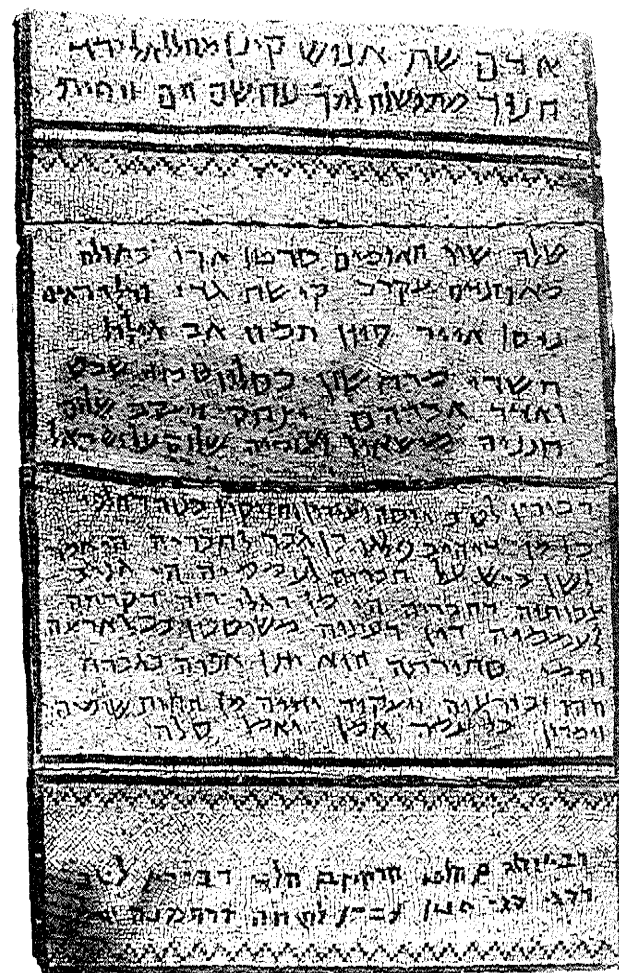
⁸ The Hebrew inscription identifying the sign Aquarius is reversed, presumably a sign that the craftsman did not know Hebrew but was following a pattern given him by the designer or commissioner of the work (Dothan, *ibid.*, 48).

⁹ The recently discovered synagogue at Sepphoris contains an even

more impressive rendering of the zodiac circle and sun chariot, and biblical scenes including Abraham and Isaac. Preliminary publication: Z. Weiss, E. Netzer, *Promise and Redemption. A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris* (Jerusalem 1996).

of Isaac, one of the comparatively few biblical scenes to be represented on synagogue floors; Hebrew inscriptions identify the subject, and the Hand of God appears out of a cloud at the top.¹⁰ In contrast to the skilful execution at Hammath Tiberias, the drawing here has a naive primitivism which betrays an absence of familiarity with any tradition of figure drawing. Human and animal forms disintegrate into an assembly of unconnected parts: the chariot of the Sun, for instance, consists of the frontal head of Helios emerging from the box of the chariot, with two wheels in side view beneath, and the four heads of the horses, likewise frontal, surmounting an array of legs. It seems clear that the mosaicists were in possession of a model which was beyond their power to copy; this implies that there was strong pressure to have a design of this sort on the floor, and that considerable prestige resulted from it. An Aramaic inscription at the entrance gave the date of the mosaics, with the mention of an emperor Justin (almost certainly Justin I, AD 518–27), while a Greek inscription records the names of the craftsmen Marianos and Aninas.

Some Jewish communities preferred more austere designs with less use of figured motifs, and avoided the human figure. At 'En-Gedi, on the Dead Sea, figured decoration on the mosaic is confined to birds, including pairs of peacocks confronted across bunches of grapes, at the centre of a carpet of intersecting circles; while three *menorahs* appear as isolated symbols. In the aisle, a long panel contained a series of inscriptions, two in Hebrew and three in Aramaic¹¹ (figure 204). The Hebrew list the ancestors of man, the signs of the zodiac, the months, and the Patriarchs; notable is the use of the written names of the zodiac in preference to the figured signs seen at Hammath Tiberias and elsewhere. The Aramaic inscriptions record the names of donors, and a remarkable curse on transgressors, especially those who reveal 'the secret of the town to the gentiles'. Even more emphasis is placed on the written word in the synagogue at Rehob, south of Scythopolis (Beth-Shean/Beisan). This was covered with geometric mosaics, except in the narthex, where a panel, 2.75 m by 4.30 m, contained a twenty-nine-line inscrip-



204 'En-Gedi, synagogue, panel with Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions. Probably fifth century AD.

tion: a Talmudic text listing Halakhic prescriptions concerning the Jewish sabbatical year and the tithes affecting various agricultural products in different regions of the country.¹² The insistence on the floor as a medium for the display of the written word appears to be dictated by the conservative nature of the communities, as a means to the edification of the congregation; the choice of this rather than the figured designs favoured in other synagogues does not necessarily indicate a difference in date.

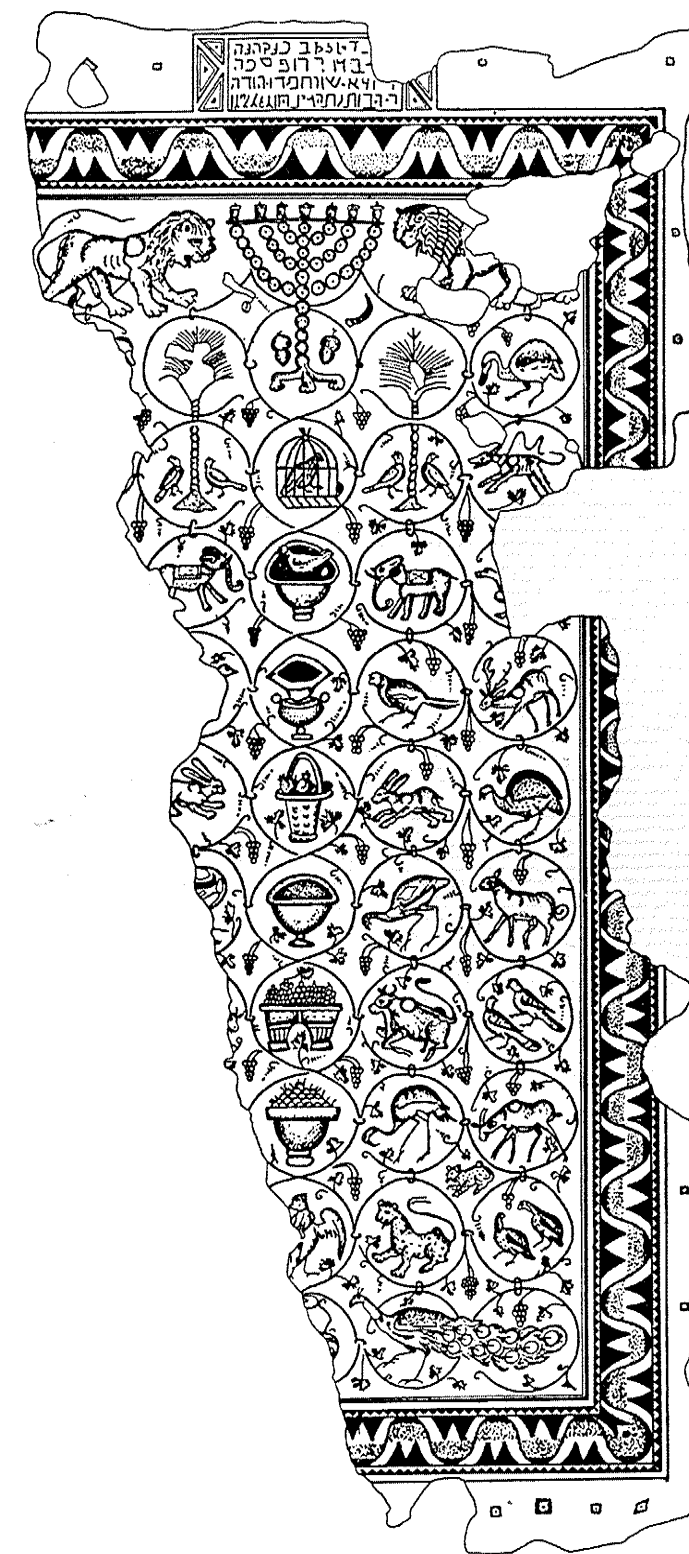
Other synagogues are decorated with mosaics which echo very closely those used in contemporary Christian churches. One very popular design is the vine scroll,

unfolding symmetrically over the floor in a series of medallions which contain animals, birds, and other motifs. A workshop specialising in such designs was identified by Avi-Yonah in the region of Gaza, where it was responsible for mosaics in both churches and synagogues. A fine example of its work is to be seen in the synagogue at Ma'on-Nirim¹³ (figure 205). A *menorah* accompanied by other ritual objects, between a pair of lions, occupies the end of the mosaic in front of the apse; vases, bowls of fruit, and similar objects are placed in the medallions of the scroll on the central axis; the rest contain animals and birds. The whole is very symmetrically arranged, with the vine scrolls reduced almost to a geometric design; no human figures are included.

III

From the late fourth century onwards the construction of innumerable churches in the Holy Land led to an enormous growth in the demand for mosaic pavements, and in consequence to the establishment of many small workshops. The huge buildings constructed on the sites of the Holy Places by Constantine and his mother were undoubtedly paved with marble (though mosaics of a later period survive in Constantine's Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem),¹⁴ but mosaic was the normal medium for the smaller churches and chapels constructed around the lesser holy sites by pilgrims, and later in monasteries. In Palestine the majority belong to the fifth and sixth centuries; the date of dedication is frequently given by inscriptions in the mosaic. On the other side of the Jordan they start somewhat later, in the late fifth century, are at their peak in the sixth, and run right on into the eighth, uninterrupted by the Arab conquest of AD 636.

The craftsmen needed to satisfy the new demands must



205 Ma'on-Nirim, synagogue, pavement of nave with vine scrolls, drawing. Probably first half of the sixth century AD.

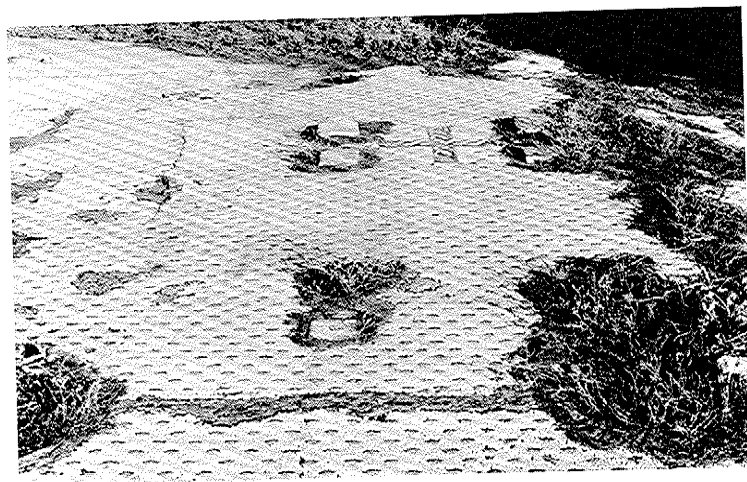
¹⁰ E.L. Sukenik, *The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha* (Jerusalem 1932).

¹¹ D. Barag, Y. Porat, E. Netzer, 'The Synagogue at 'En-Gedi', in L. Levine ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem 1981), 116–19; L. Levine, 'The inscription in the 'En-Gedi Synagogue', *ibid.* 140–5; Ovadia, *Israel* 54–6, no.73, pls.XLIII–XLIV, CLXXVII. The date is disputed, but is unlikely to be earlier than the fifth century; it was destroyed probably in the reign of Justinian.

¹² F. Vitto, 'The Synagogue at Rehob', in Levine ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (cit.n.11), 90–4; J. Sussmann, 'The inscription in the Synagogue at Rehob', *ibid.* 146–53; Ovadia, *Israel* 120–3, nos.206–8, pls.cxxxv–cxxxvi. The narthex with the inscription was added to the original building, apparently in the sixth to seventh century.

¹³ M. Avi-Yonah, 'Une école de mosaïque à Gaza au sixième siècle', *CMGR* 11, 377–83, pls.CLXXIX–CLXXXII; Avi-Yonah, 'The mosaic pavement', *The ancient Synagogue of Ma'on (Nirim)* (*Bulletin of the Louis M. Rabinowitz Fund* 3, 1960), 25–35, pls.III–VIII; Ovadia, *Israel* 176–7, pls.CXVI–CXIX, CLXXV–CLXXXVI. Probably first half of sixth century.

¹⁴ For a date in the early fifth century see E. Kitzinger, 'Stylistic developments in pavement mosaics in the Greek East from the age of Constantine to the age of Justinian', *CMGR* 1, 346–7; Kitzinger, 'The Threshold of the Holy Shrine: observations on floor mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem', in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten* 11 (Münster 1970), 639–47; also Ovadia, *Israel* 21–3, nos.19–20, pls.xv–xviii.



206 Shavei Zion, church, pavement of nave. Probably early fifth century AD.

have come in the first place from centres to the north; and it is not surprising that the trends and fashions of decoration visible on the Syrian floors of the late fourth and fifth centuries are generally paralleled by those of Palestine. Geometric designs using rainbow-style motifs, floral-trellis and imbrications, or interlace patterns, are all widespread; uninterrupted carpets of these designs cover long areas of aisles or naves. The small church of Shavei Zion, on the coast of Israel north of Acre, offers a good example of simple decoration of this type. In the original phase of this building, probably of the early fifth century, nave, aisles, and an adjacent chapel were all paved with variants of the floral-trellis or floral imbrication patterns (figure 206). Such repetitive carpets were cheap and easy to lay, and they adapted easily to any architectural or liturgical requirements; their simplicity is probably to be attributed as much to economic factors as to the austere tastes of Christian patrons. Almost the only interruptions to the carpets come from a number of crosses, plain or in wreaths, some of them beneath the site of offering-tables or other liturgical features (plate 32). Later pavements in the narthex, and at a higher level in the chapel, have much richer and more ornate patterns, still entirely geometric.¹⁵

Equally simple carpets paved nave, aisles and chancel of

¹⁵ M. Avi-Yonah, ch.3 in M. Prausnitz, *Excavations at Shavei Zion. The Early Christian Church* (Rome 1967), 47–63; H. Brandenburg, 'Christussymbole in frühchristlichen Bodenmosaiken', *RömQSch* 64, 1969, 89–97. The pavement of the outer narthex, which Avi-Yonah places in a third phase of decoration, is dated to AD 486, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the earlier mosaics. For the crosses, see below, n.21.

¹⁶ A.M. Schneider, *The Church of the Multiplying of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha on the Lake of Gennesaret and its Mosaics* (London 1937), 52–80; S. Loffreda, 'Sondaggio nella Chiesa della Moltiplicazione dei Pani a Tabgha', *LA* 20, 1970, 370–80. A construction date in the second half of the fifth century is indicated by the

the church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, at et-Tabgha on Lake Gennesaret.¹⁶ A panel behind the altar (apparently belonging to a second phase of decoration) contains a basket of bread and two fish, symbols of the miracle which the church commemorates. But in the transepts are two panels which show Nilotic flora and fauna and buildings, including a tall Nilometer, scattered over the plain white ground (figure 207). They may be dated to the second half of the fifth century, and form an early example of the return of figured subjects, fully developed in the next century. The intention is to use the traditional repertory in order to portray the wealth and fertility of the earth. In a secular context much more elaborate Nilotic scenes were used in the fifth century on another mosaic recently discovered in Sepphoris.¹⁷ It shows the Nile in flood, with water streaming from the mouth of a hippopotamus ridden by the Nile-god, while the personification of Egypt reclines on the other side. Putti mark the level of the flood, seventeen cubits, on a Nilometer, and carry flowers and wreaths to the god. Below are celebrations of the flood level to the city of Alexandria, beside which stands the Pharos. The rest of the pavement is filled with beasts and their prey, in a rich landscape background. There is a marked contrast with the rather austere treatment of the theme at et-Tabgha, where the designer picked out only those elements considered appropriate, and ignored the human figures. The designers of later church floors were to draw on a much more extensive range of material from the Nilotic repertory.

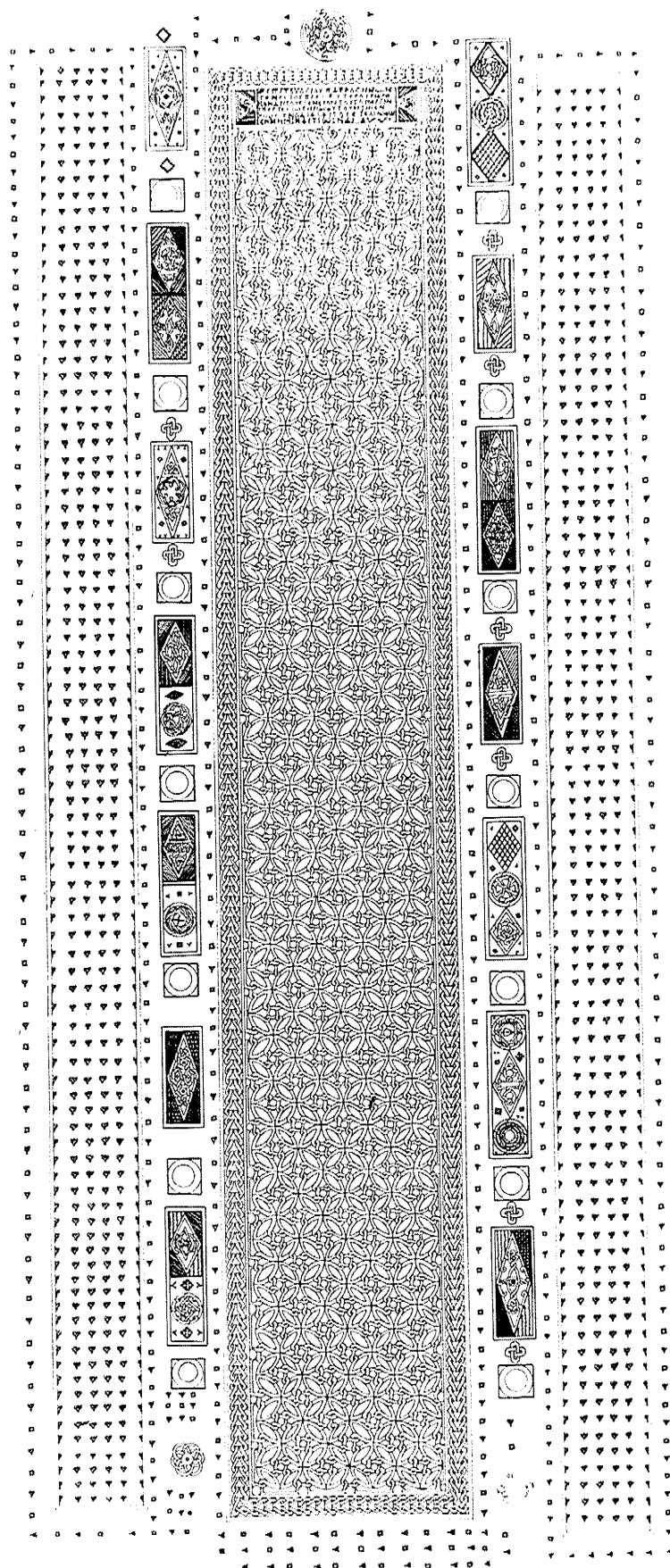
The churches of the sixth century in both Palestine and Jordan are considerably richer in their decoration than those of the fifth. The same designs continued to be used, but the simpler forms were confined to secondary spaces and minor rooms. For the main decoration more lavish ornamental schemes were preferred, although the taste for all-over patterns and endless repetitive carpets

material found beneath the floor: see R. Rosenthal, M. Hershkovič, *IEJ* 30, 1980, 207.

¹⁷ E. Netzer, Z. Weiss, *Zippori* (Jerusalem 1994), 46–51; Netzer, Weiss, 'New evidence for late-Roman and Byzantine Sepphoris', in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (JRA suppl.14, Ann Arbor 1995), 166–71, figs.4–10. Excavation of the building, which contained other impressive mosaics, began in 1991; only preliminary information has been published. The excavators have suggested that it may have been used for celebrations of a water festival; the Nile mosaic was apparently designed to have water poured over it, recalling the Palestrina Nile mosaic more than 500 years earlier.



207 et-Tabgha, Church of Multiplication, Nilotic panel from left transept. 5.50 m × 6.50 m. Second half of the fifth century AD.



208 Ma'ale Adummim, refectory, ornamental mosaic. 12 m × 26.5 m. Second half of the sixth century AD.

persisted. Floral-trellis and imbrication patterns remained common, but two schemes were especially favoured: the vegetal scroll, extended from its role as border to cover large areas, and the interlace, either forming a series of regular medallions or else twined into ever more complex loops and knots. An impressive array of these ornamental designs can be seen in the Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas), between Jerusalem and Jericho, most of whose mosaics are dated to the second half of the sixth century.¹⁸ Most striking is the pavement of the long refectory, where the central nave is covered with an unbroken carpet of interlooped bands which twine into circles and pointed ovals (figure 208). Panels in the intercolumniations contain an extraordinary range of individual looped motifs, as if to show off the virtuosity with which they could be handled.

Even more characteristic of the sixth century is the return to favour of figured motifs. The compartments of a geometric design are frequently occupied each by a separate figure – animals, birds, fruit, flowers, objects such as vases, and occasionally humans. The loops of an interlace design may be filled in the same way, as may the compartments of a floral-trellis.¹⁹ Scrolls used for borders had habitually been peopled by birds, animals, or hunting putti; the all-over scrolls also enclose figures²⁰ (for example figure 205). Free designs also occur, with animal and sometimes human figures distributed over the surface without formal framework, resembling the

¹⁸ Y. Magen, R. Talgam, 'The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) and its mosaics', in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land. New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo, OFM (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Maior 36, Jerusalem 1990)*, 91–152; Y. Magen, 'The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim', in Y. Tsafir ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem 1993), 170–96, pls. ix–xi.

¹⁹ For compartments filled with animals and other motifs, cf. (among numerous examples) Beth Shean/Beisan monastery: G. FitzGerald, *A Sixth-Century Monastery at Beth-Shean (Scythopolis)* (Philadelphia 1939), 6–7, pls. vi–x; Ovadia, *Israel* 26–7, no. 26, Hall A, pl. xxi; Gerasa, SS. Cosmas and Damianos: F. Biebel, 'Mosaics' in C. H. Kraeling, *Gerasa. City of the Decapolis* (New Haven 1938), 331–2, pl. lxxiii. For loops of interlace design similarly filled, cf. Caesarea, church: Ovadia, *Israel* 48–9, no. 62, pl. xxxviii; Kursi, church: *ibid.* 103–4, no. 172, pls. cix–cxii. Floral-trellis: Piccirillo, *Madaba* 31–2, 114, etc.

²⁰ E.g. the scrolls in the synagogue at Ma'on, above n. 13, and comparable church pavements at Beit Jibrin/Beth Guvrin and Jerusalem (Armenian mosaic): Avi-Yonah, *CMGR* 11, 378–9, pls. clxxx. Cf. also C. Dauphin, 'Byzantine pattern books: a re-examination of the problem in the light of the "inhabited scroll"', *Art History* 1.4, 1978, 400–23.



209 Gerasa, Church of SS. Cosmas and Damianos, panel showing Georgia wife of Theodoros as donor. AD 533.

'figured carpets' of Syria. There are, inevitably, local peculiarities; the pattern of church building, and the prosperity that permitted it, were not the same in all regions, and certain designs and themes were favoured more strongly by one workshop than another. Indeed, there seems to be a tendency to greater regional individualism in the sixth century, perhaps because the quantity of building permitted numerous small workshops to flourish.

The more ambitious floors contain a wide variety of subject-matter. Christian symbols include the cross, and, less often, the monogram of Christ. An imperial edict, issued by the emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III in AD 427, prohibited the representation of the 'sign of our saviour Christ' carved or painted on the floor, but this did not succeed in banning the practice; imperial edicts seldom achieved universal enforcement.²¹ More general Christian symbols, such as peacocks, birds drinking from a *kantharos*, doves, lambs, palm trees, stags drinking the

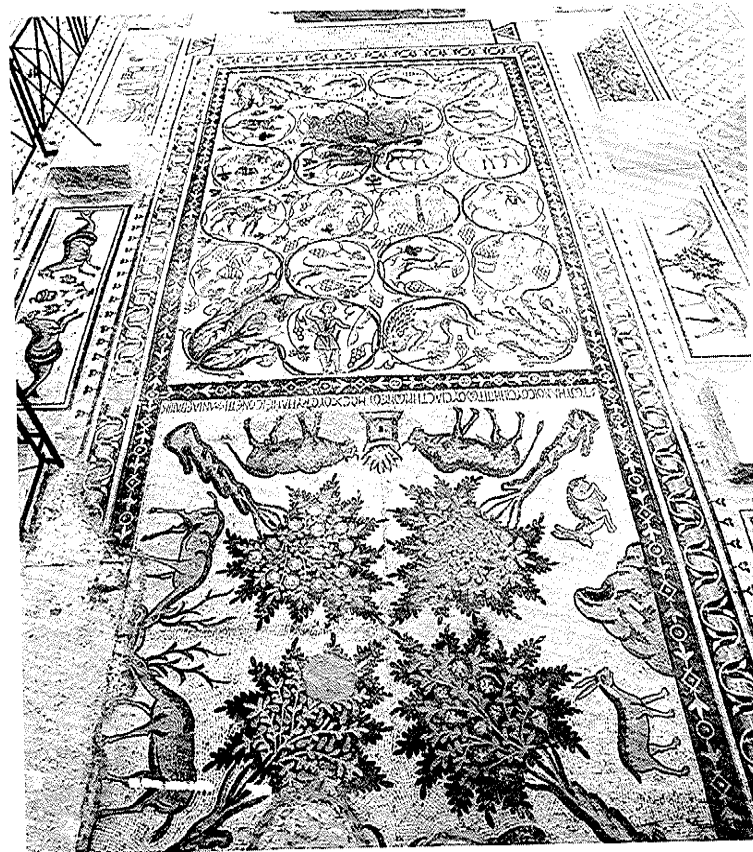
water of life, are very common at all periods. Biblical scenes are very rare indeed, though Jonah occurs on a pavement at Beit Jibrin/Beth Guvrin.²² Evidently scenes from Old or New Testament were not normally considered to be appropriate on the floor. The donors of the mosaics, or of the whole building, are not only frequently recorded in inscriptions but also represented in image, full-length or in bust. At Gerasa (Jerash), for instance, the church of SS. Cosmas and Damianos contains two panels flanking the dedicatory inscription (dated AD 533) in front of the chancel: they show the donors, Theodoros the *paramonarios* (sacristan) with an incense-burner, and his wife Georgia in an attitude of prayer (figure 209). Two further donors, with offerings, appear in the uppermost panels of the geometric carpet in the nave.²³

Among the most popular themes in the sixth century are genre scenes, mainly dealing with the activities of the countryside. These are most often inserted in the curls of

²¹ *Cod. Iust.* 1.8.1, ed. P. Krueger (Berlin 1877): *signum salvatoris Christi nemini licere vel in solo vel in silice vel in marmoribus humi positum insculpere vel pingere* . . . Cf. Brandenburg, 'Christussymbole' (cit. n. 15), 110, 125–37; Kitzinger, *Kyriakon* (cit. n. 14), 641; Ovadia, *Israel* 162.

²² Ovadia, *Israel* 18–20, no. 17, pls. x–xi; D.C. Baramki, *LA* 22, 1972, 130–52.

²³ Biebel, 'Mosaics' (cit. n. 19), 331–2, pl. lxxiii; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 288–9, pls. 507, 509, 535.



210 Nebo, Church of SS. Lot and Procopius, view of nave. Overall dimensions 8.65 m × 16.25 m. Mid-sixth century AD.



211 Nebo, Church of SS. Lot and Procopius, detail of vine scrolls.

all-over vine or acanthus scrolls, where they may accompany little scenes of hunting. Sometimes the selection appears to be largely anecdotal, but often it is clear that there is a unifying underlying significance. The church floor becomes an image of the earth, with its varied inhabitants, its produce, and the work needed to maintain it: in a complete programme of decoration, the earthly creation on the floor would complement the heavenly sphere of apse and vaults, while the walls illustrate God's covenant with man.²⁴

IV

One of the most flourishing centres of mosaic production was that around Madaba in the province of Arabia (modern Jordan), close to the traditional burial place of Moses on Mount Nebo. Inscriptions on the mosaics often give their date, in addition to recording the names and titles of numerous donors, both clerics and laymen. These show that the main period of production here began in the second half of the fifth century, and reached its zenith towards the middle of the sixth, in the reign of Justinian. Production continued unabated to the beginning of the seventh century, while isolated examples carried the tradition on as far as the eighth. Inhabited vine and acanthus scrolls of the type just discussed are a favourite design on numerous mosaics of the region; others show carpets of animals, often with human attendants. Thus in the church of SS. Lot and Procopius in the village of Nebo (Khirbet el-Mukhayyat), dated to the mid-sixth century, two panels cover the nave²⁵ (figure 210). The first, at the entrance, contains four fruit trees set diagonally, with pairs of beasts along the sides: allusions to Paradise and to sacrifice. The second panel is covered by a vine scroll, whose curls contain lively little scenes of hunters and vintagers: two men tread the grapes in a vine-press, to the sound of a pipe played by a man in the next scroll; another leads a laden ass, a hunter sets his dog after a hare, and so on (figure 211). An even lusher scroll, of acanthus this time, covered the floor of the chapel of Priest John in the same village, of similar

²⁴ Cf. H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park and London 1987); C. Dauphin, 'Symbolic or decorative? The inhabited scroll as a means for studying some early Byzantine mentalities', *Byzantion* 48, 1978, 10-34, for different levels at which such floors might have been read.

²⁵ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 182-8; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 164-5, figs.201-15.

date.²⁶ The brilliantly coloured pink, blue-grey and yellow leaves again contain scenes of hunting and the countryside: a shepherd aims a slingshot at a boar, a girl carries a basket of fruit. Two youths offer baskets full of fruit, and between them appears a female bust holding a swag of fruit, identified by an inscription as *Ge*, the Earth. The significance of the floor is here made clear: a celebration of the fruits of the earth which are offered to their Creator, and of the mastery of man over the beasts. A separate panel at the end of the nave contains a stylised architectural motif recalling a temple façade, enclosing an inscription with the names of donors, between birds, flowers and fruit trees; while the maeander border includes panels with the busts of benefactors, a richly dressed lady and a tonsured cleric.

The liveliness and realistic detail of some of the genre scenes illustrate the survival, or rather the revival, of traditions and motifs going back to the Hellenistic period; a revival often connected with the 'classicising renaissance' under Justinian. The classicism, it should be noted, is one of subject-matter rather than of style: the latter is usually naive and linear, though often lively. To the same trend may be attributed the personifications of natural forces, who had long lost any sense of representing actual deities. In addition to the Earth, as at Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, these include the Sea, whose bust, labelled in Greek *Thalassa* and surrounded by sea-monsters, appears in the Church of the Apostles at Madaba²⁷ (figure 212). More remarkable is the appearance of scenes from traditional mythology, a Dionysiac procession, Achilles, Heracles; these presumably come from secular buildings, though the context is seldom clear.²⁸ Outstanding among these is the mosaic from the 'Hall of Hippolytus' at Madaba.²⁹ Beneath the Church of the Virgin here was a hall, paved with a mosaic which can be placed in the mid-sixth century by analogy with dated mosaics in Madaba. The border is an acanthus scroll on a black ground, peopled with hunters and animals, closely resembling others in the region. It surrounds a field divided into two parts, one a floral-trellis containing a variety of birds and plants, typical of Madaban work of the period. The eastern section contains

²⁶ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 190-2; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 174-7, figs.216-43; Maguire, *Earth and Ocean* (cit.n.24), 69-72.

²⁷ U. Lux, 'Die Apostel-Kirche in Madaba', *ZDPV* 84, 1968, 106-29, pls.14-35; Piccirillo, *Madaba* 96-107, dated 578-9; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 106-7, figs.78-95. The medallion is at the centre of a carpet-pattern of unusual type, with rows of parrots forming a grid in which plants are set; the design recalls eastern textiles.

²⁸ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 134-8; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 76-80, figs.32-48, 55.

two figured scenes in superimposed panels (figure 213). One (partly damaged) represents the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus. In the other Aphrodite and Adonis are enthroned, surrounded by the *Charites* (Graces) and by playing Erotes, one of whom Aphrodite spans with her sandal. In both panels the characters, major and minor, are identified by inscriptions. Although the ultimate derivation of the two mythological scenes must go back to prototypes of the Hellenistic or Roman period, other details (such as Hippolytus' attendant holding a falcon) indicate a Byzantine version as a more immediate source. The style too is that of the sixth century: elongated inorganic figures floating against a plain white ground; frontal oval faces, with big wide-open eyes, and firm delineation of features; limbs and other details clearly outlined; striking chromatic effects, with the drapery handled as a series of light and dark stripes, and patches of colour giving form to the faces. Outside the border, next to the entrance, three city-goddesses are enthroned, identified by inscription as those of Madaba itself, of Roma, and of the otherwise unknown Gregoria (figure 214). The presence of Rome, which by this date had long lost its political pre-eminence, is almost certainly to be associated with the policy of the emperor Justinian to reintegrate his conquests in Italy and the west into the empire now ruled from Constantinople, and to restore Rome, at least morally, to its old authority. That such a policy is echoed in a remote city like Madaba may indicate that the building decorated by this mosaic had an official, public function. The mythological scenes show no sign of pagan religious content, but illustrate a renaissance of classical culture, literary and visual, which must also have originated in larger centres and radiated out to remoter cities. They remind us how misleading a picture of early Byzantine art is given by the almost total disappearance of the decoration of secular buildings.

Another major source of material lay in topography. This was used in various ways to produce new schemes of decoration appropriate for the floors of Christian buildings. One work is unique: the map which paved part of the floor of a small church at Madaba³⁰ (figure 215; plate 33). The main surviving fragment measures around

²⁹ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 41-66; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 23-6, 64-6, figs.1-31; *id.*, *Mos. Giordania* 48-54, and H. Buschhausen, 'La Sala dell'Ippolito, presso la Chiesa della Vergine Maria', *ibid.* 117-27.

³⁰ M. Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map* (Jerusalem 1954); H. Donner, H. Cüppers, *Die Mosaikkarte von Madaba 1, Tafelband* (Wiesbaden 1977), with full bibliography; Piccirillo, *Madaba* 76-95; *id.*, *Jordan* 26-34, 94-5, figs.61-77; P. Donceel-Voûte, 'La Carte de Madaba: cosmographie, anachronisme et propagande', *RevBibl* 95, 1988, 519-42.



212 Madaba, Church of Apostles, mosaic with bust of *Thalassa* and signature of Salamanios, at centre of carpet-pattern with parrots and floral motifs; border of acanthus scroll. Diameter of central medallion 2.20 m. AD 578–579.

10.50 m long (north–south) by 5.60 m wide (west–east); smaller fragments indicate a total original length of approximately 15.70 m. It is orientated towards the east, corresponding to its location in the church. At the centre is the city of Jerusalem; the original limits must have stretched from Tyre and Sidon in the north to the Nile Delta, and from the Mediterranean to the Arabian desert. It shows the lands of the Bible, with their principal geographic features, their cities, towns and villages. Inscriptions identify the territory of the tribes of Israel and label the main places; they expand on the importance

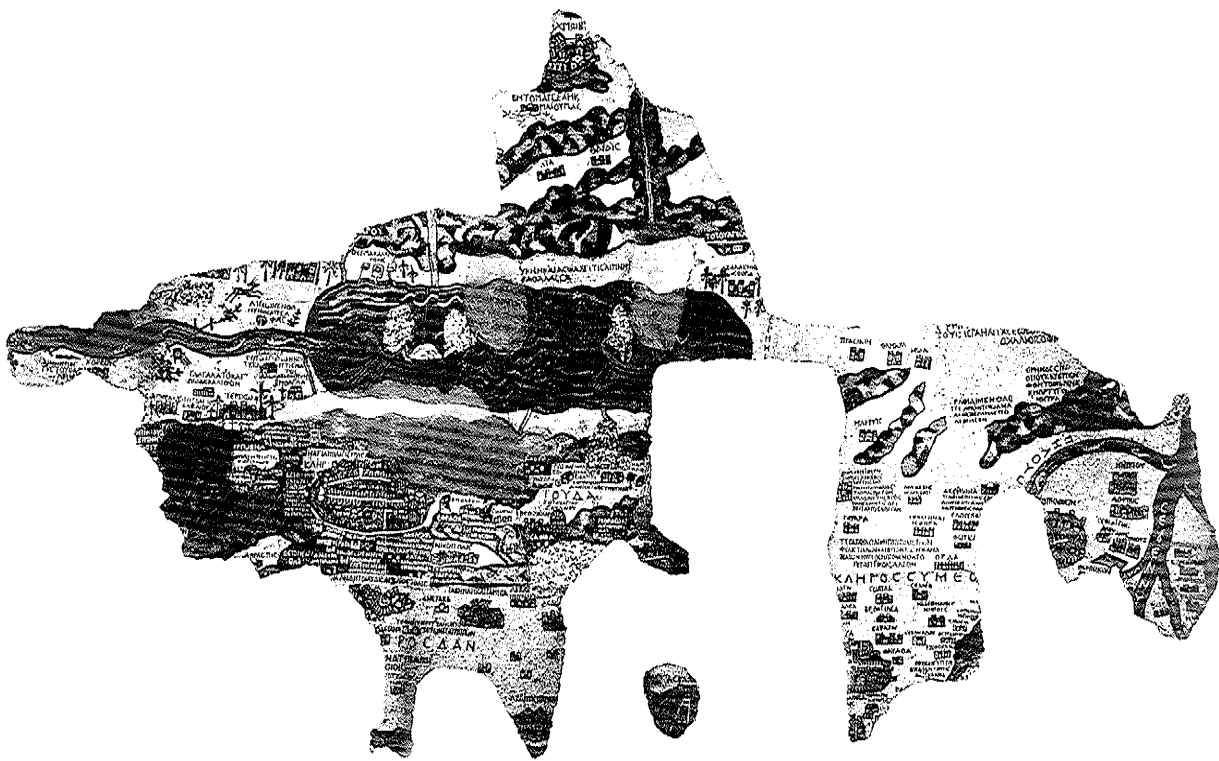
of some, occasionally with biblical quotations. Against the white ground stand out mountain ranges in surrealist patches of colour, and rivers enlivened by boats, fish, and details such as the ferries across the Jordan. The architectural monuments range from very simple symbols of towers linked by gated walls, used for villages, to complicated portrayals of the major cities; these are in bird's-eye view from above, the circuit of their walls crammed with buildings, churches, the main streets lined with porticoes, even pools and fountains. Especially detailed is the representation of Jerusalem, where many of



213 Madaba, Hall of Hippolytus, eastern section showing scenes of Phaedra and Hippolytus (below), Aphrodite and Adonis (above). Width c.7.30 m. Mid-sixth century AD.



214 Madaba, Hall of Hippolytus, city personifications outside border.



215 Madaba, Church of Map, map of Holy Land. c.10.50 m × 5.60 m. Probably c.560 AD.

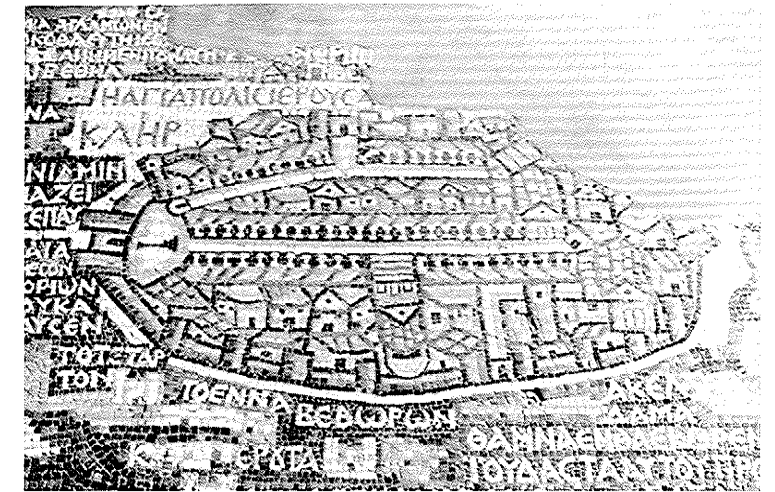
the principal monuments have been identified (figure 216). It is shown as an oval within its walls, bisected by the main colonnaded street which runs from a great column at the north gate, supposedly the centre of the earth. Among the many churches the most prominent is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: it appears upside down, like all the buildings on the west side of the city, with steps leading up to the façade of the basilica, topped by a red roof, and followed by the court of Calvary and the golden dome over the tomb of Christ.

Outside the cities other monuments and places of pilgrimage are marked: the twelve stones of Galgala, near Jericho (Joshua 4.19) (plate 33), the hot springs of Kallirhoe by the Dead Sea, the Oak of Mamre, and many others. Internal evidence of the buildings represented allows the map (or its model) to be dated to the mid-sixth century, probably the 560s. Numerous elements have contributed to its form, most directly probably a map of the Holy Land prepared for the use of pilgrims, whose rendering in permanent form in mosaic was intended for the

edification of the faithful, to familiarise them with sacred geography. At the same time, by a common multivalence of meaning, two other familiar ideas are expressed in original form. The history of salvation is portrayed in its geographical setting, as a monument to the working out of God's covenant in the land of Israel; and the church becomes an image of the cosmos, with the floor of the nave as the earth.³¹

More often the topographical references take the form of vignettes of cities and other buildings, in friezes, panels, or loosely combined with other subjects. Examples may be seen at Gerasa (Jerash), in the Church of St John Baptist dedicated in AD 531, and in several churches in the Madaba region.³² The most remarkable occur in two churches dated to the eighth century, which show that the Christian communities continued to build and decorate churches after the victory of Islam, under the rule of the tolerant Umayyad caliphs. In the acropolis church at Ma'in, dated 719/20, a fragmentary frieze contained representations of eleven cities and villages of

of the faith; she proposes a date in the first half of the seventh century.
³² Biebel, 'Mosaics' (cit.n.19), 324–9, 341–51, pls.LXVII–LXIX; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 34–5; *Mos. Giordania* 220–2, Cat.nos.2–12; N. Duval, 'L'iconografia architettonica nei mosaici di Giordania', *ibid.* 151–5. Cf. J. Deckers, 'Tradition und Adaption. Bemerkungen zur Darstellung der christlichen Stadt', *RömMitt* 95, 1988, 303–82.



216 Madaba, Church of Map, detail showing Jerusalem.

Palestine and Transjordan.³³ Better preserved representations appear among the magnificent mosaics of the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (Umm al-Rasas)³⁴ (figure 217). The mosaics of the nave here have been dated as late as AD 785, but the reading of the inscription giving the date has been shown to be unreliable and an earlier eighth-century date, probably 717/18 has been proposed.³⁵ A second inscription dates the aniconic mosaics of the presbytery to AD 756. In the nave a central field of inhabited vine scroll is surrounded by a border with a Nilotic frieze on a black ground; among the fish, river flora, and putti fishing from boats (further survivals of the Graeco-Roman repertory) are vignettes of ten cities of the Nile Delta. Beyond this, in the intercolumniations, two further friezes represent sixteen city-vignettes, eight each from Palestine and Transjordan, including Madaba and Kastron Mefaa itself. The reasons for the choice are not all clear; those of Palestine are major episcopal seats, starting with the Holy City of Jerusalem, but the Transjordanian ones include some smaller villages. Most of them are rendered by variations on a single scheme: a turreted wall, usually with a central gate, encloses buildings of basilical plan or domed. Following the characteristic late antique style of architectural illustration, buildings may be shown 'exploded' into separate parts, or with views of different elements juxtaposed side by side. A few are more individual: Neapolis (Nablus) is represented by the façade of a pagan temple, while to Kastron Mefaa itself a double space is allotted, which contains, in addition to the standard city-view, a sanctuary with lit lamps (perhaps St Stephen itself) and a single column in a court beyond³⁶ (figure 218).

Elsewhere in the mosaics of St Stephen Greek inscriptions give the names of numerous donors, the majority of Arab or other Semitic origin. Two different teams of mosaicists also left their records, Staurachios of Esbous and his colleague Euremios, who signed the geometric mosaics of the presbytery dated to 756, and an anonymous group working in the nave, who left an inscription calling on the Lord to 'remember thy slaves the mosaicists, whose names thou knowest', a formula found else-

³³ Piccirillo, *Jordan* 35–6, 200–1, figs.299–312.

³⁴ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 282–308; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 36–7, 238–9, figs.344–58, 380–7.

³⁵ For the problem of the date, and arguments in favour of 717/18, see J. Balty, 'Les mosaïques d'Umm al-Rasas et la date de 718', *JRA* 11, 1998, 700–2; also G. Bowersock, *JRA* 11, 1998, 697–9. The question has important repercussions for the problem of the iconographic destructions discussed below, n.39.

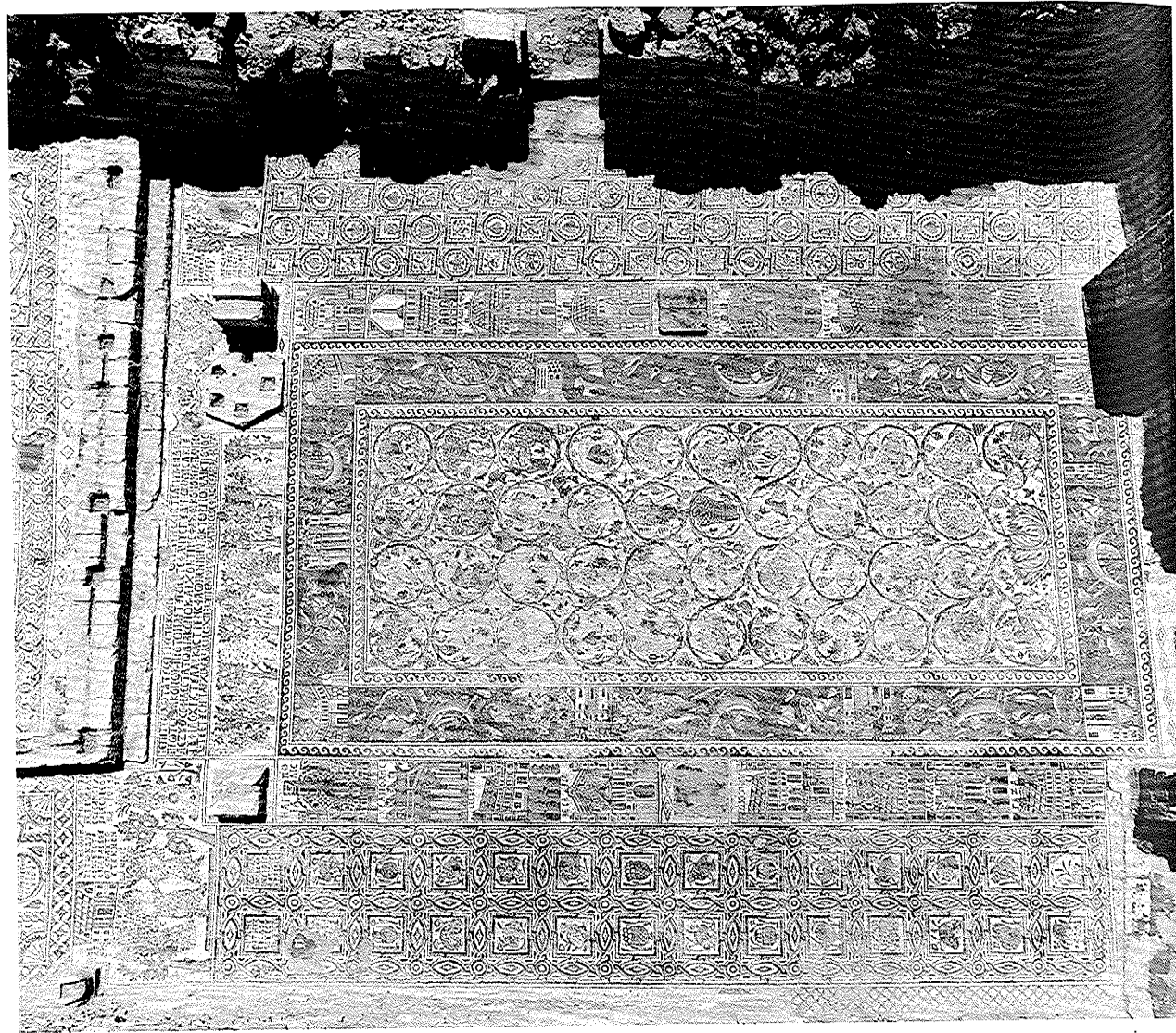
where in Christian buildings.³⁷ Portraits of donors accompanied many of the inscriptions; but these, like all the living figures in this church and in its earlier neighbours, the Church of Bishop Sergius and the Church of the Lions, have been deliberately defaced and replaced either by crude geometric or floral motifs or by plain patches of tesserae. Similar examples of such methodical iconoclastic defacement and repair are found in other mosaics in both Palestine and Jordan. The repairs sometimes leave the original design almost unrecognisable. Thus in the acropolis church at Ma'in the disembodied hind legs and tail of a bull remain; shrubs and scrolls growing from an amphora have replaced the rest, but the beginning of a quotation from Isaiah 65.25, 'The lion shall eat straw like an ox', identifies the original composition³⁸ (figure 219).

Anti-iconic tendencies had been present among Christian communities long before the outbreak of the official Byzantine iconoclastic movement in the eighth century. At the same time that some communities were covering the floors of their churches with rich figured designs, others restricted decoration to aniconic patterns, or introduced at the most symbolic figures such as birds and fish. The richness and complexity of some of the designs show that economy was not the only deciding factor in these instances: the lay-out of complicated patterns of interlace, for example, will have required considerable care and attention. Given these tendencies, it

³⁶ A similar view of Kastron Mefaa occurs at an earlier date (574 or 589) in the Church of the Lions at Umm al-Rasas, but without accompanying views of other cities: M. Piccirillo, 'La chiesa dei Leoni a Umm al-Rasas – Kastron Mefaa', *LA* 42, 1992, 199–225, pls.1–22; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 236–7, fig.337.

³⁷ Cf. below, ch.16, n.21.

³⁸ Piccirillo, *Madaba* 230–1; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 201, figs.302, 312.

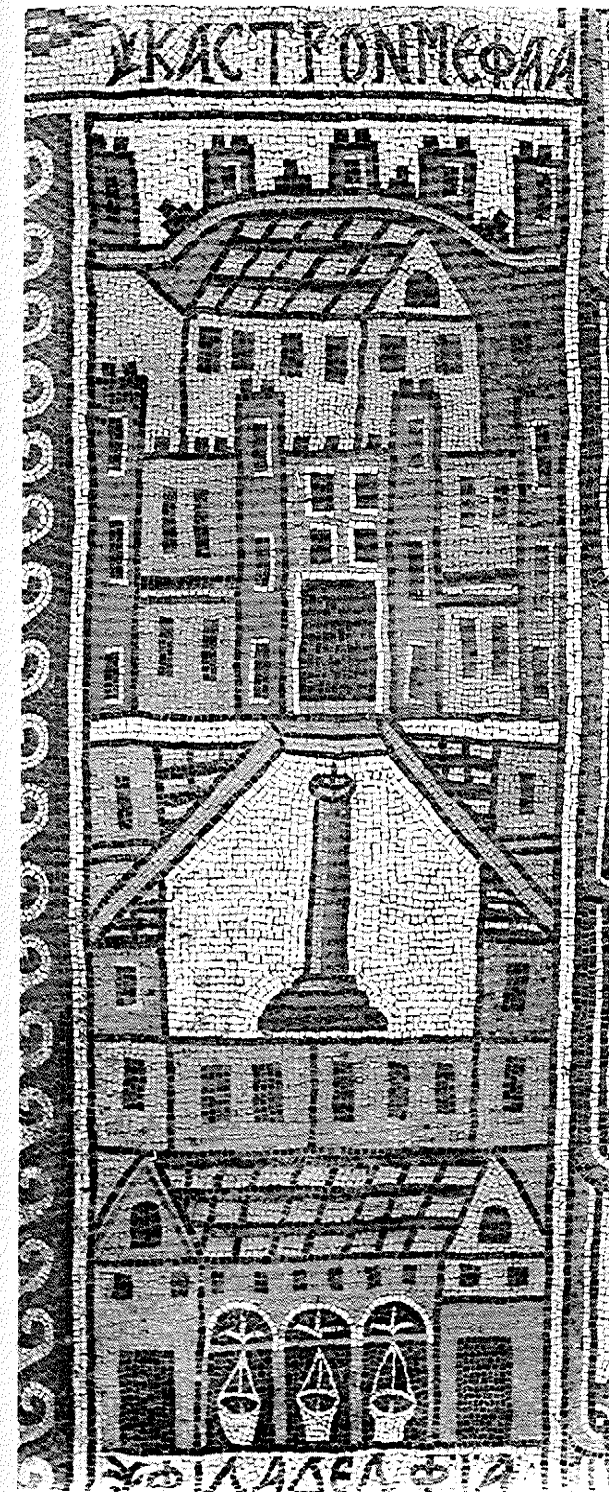


217 Kastron Mefaa, Church of St Stephen, view of nave and aisles. Eighth century AD.

cannot be assumed that all the marks of destruction of figured images found on the mosaics are necessarily to be assigned to the same period. Some may have been caused by changes in the attitude of the individual community (or its spiritual leaders) towards images. Nevertheless, the methodical character of much of the destruction suggests an organised campaign. This cannot have been the result of official Byzantine policy, since by the date of its promulgation the region was under Islamic rule. Moreover the destruction affects not just sacred images, but images of all living creatures, often including animals and birds; it indicates a much more far-reaching opposition to figured images than in the Byzantine world. Mosaics with figured

motifs continued to be laid at least until the early eighth century; their destruction has been associated with the iconoclastic edict supposedly issued by the Caliph Yazid II in AD 721, which ordered the destruction of all images of living things in Christian buildings. The evidence for this is not clear, however, and others have attributed the destruction to later Moslem anti-iconic policies under the Abbasid caliphs, or a reaction against images within the Christian communities themselves. In either case, the careful repair of the damaged floors with neutral designs shows that the communities survived, and continued to enjoy the use of their churches.³⁹

During the Umayyad Period, Amman 1987 11 (Amman 1989), 37–48; S.H. Griffith, 'Images, Islam and Christian Icons', in P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais eds., *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII^e–VIII^e siècles* (Damascus 1992), 121–38; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 41–2. The date of the damaged nave



218 Kastron Mefaa, Church of St Stephen, panel from intercolumniation showing vignette of Kastron Mefaa.

mosaics in the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (above, n.35) is critical for this issue. If the date 785 is correct, it shows not only that figured designs could still be laid at this date, but also that they must have fallen victim to a later campaign; on the other hand, a date of 717/18 would fit other examples of early eighth-century mosaics destroyed by iconoclasts, for instance those in the church at Ma'in dated 719/20.



219 Ma'in, Acropolis Church, scene originally showing lion and ox but with iconoclastic restorations. Original design AD 719–720.

V

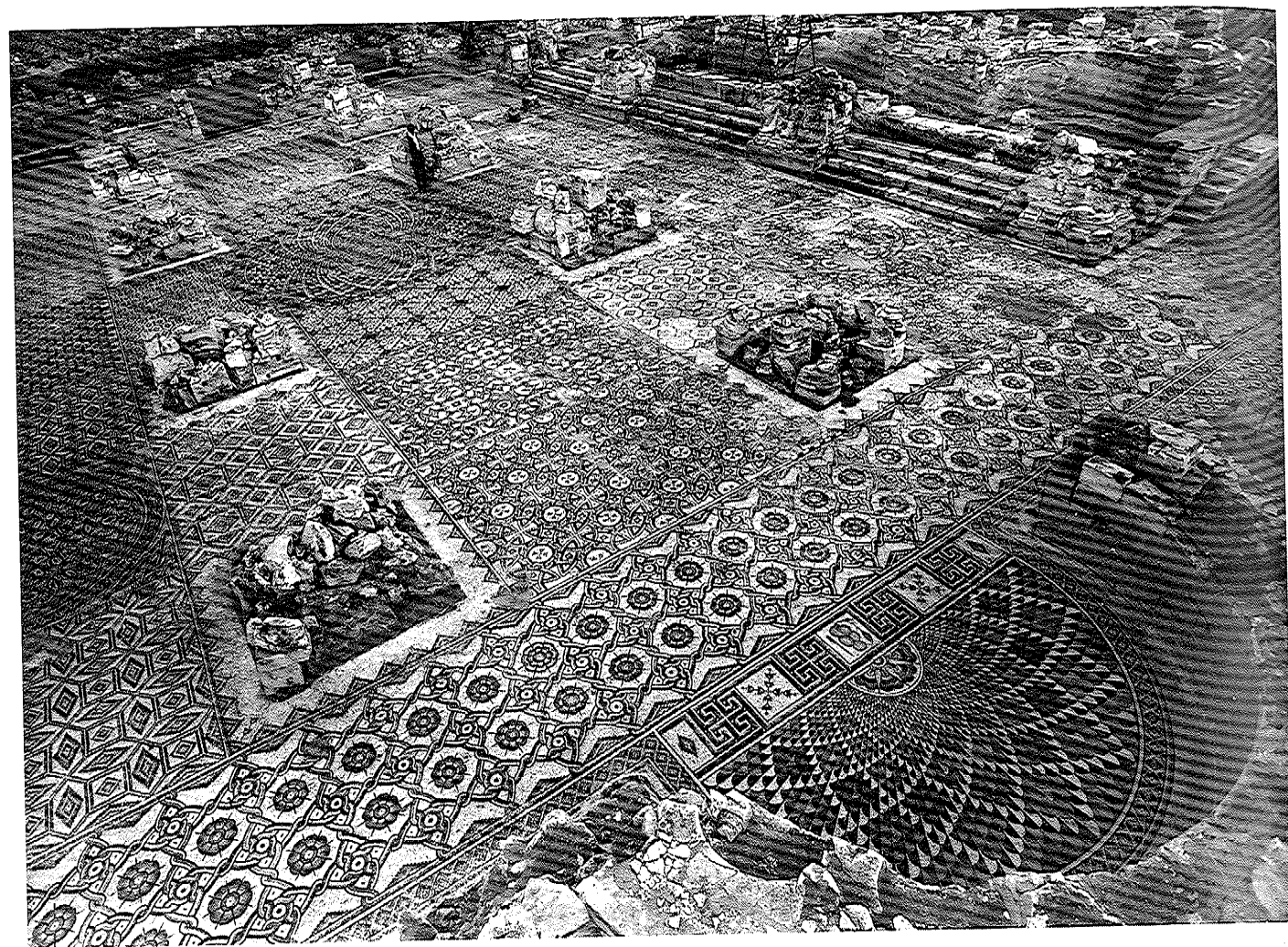
The use of mosaic under the Umayyads was not confined to Christian churches; the conquerors also adopted the craft to decorate their own buildings. Magnificent wall mosaics adorned several of the great Umayyad mosques, above all the Great Mosque at Damascus and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; but these, like the Byzantine wall mosaics to which they are related, are outside the scope of this work. Floor mosaics were also used in several of the Umayyad castles and palaces: Khirbet el-Minyeh on Lake Gennesaret; Qasr el-Hallabat, Qastal and Qasr 'Amra east of the Jordan.⁴⁰ These are predominantly aniconic, but animals and even a human figure appear at Qasr el-Hallabat; while a mosaic from Ramla, apparently from a private house, includes a representation of a *mihrab* enclosing a quotation from the Koran.⁴¹ None can compete with those at the palace at Khirbet el-Mafjar, north of Jericho, built under the Caliph Hisham who reigned between AD 724 and 743. The main hall, about 30 m square, was covered with an almost perfectly preserved mosaic⁴² (figure 220). The space is divided into twenty-nine panels around a large central circle, while

⁴⁰ K. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* 1.2 (2nd edn, Oxford 1969), 386–7, pls.68–9 (Khirbet el-Minyeh); G. Bisheh, 'Pavimentazioni musive omiadi da Qasr el-Hallabat in Giordania', in Piccirillo, *Mos. Giordania* 129–34; P. Carlier, F. Morin, 'Archaeological researches at Qastal', *ADAJ* 31, 1987, 221–30, pls.xxxix–xlIII; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 343–53.

⁴¹ M. Rosen-Ayalon, 'The first mosaic discovered in Ramla', *IEJ* 26, 1976, 104–19, pls.23–5.

⁴² R.W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar. An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford 1959), esp.327–42, pls.LXXVI–XCIII, xcviia–xcix; R.

³⁹ Cf. A. Vasiliev, 'The iconoclastic edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D.721', *DOP* 9–10, 1956, 25–47; R. Schick, 'The fate of the Christian communities in Palestine during the Byzantine-Umayyad transition, 600–750 A.D.', *Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham*



220 Khirbet el-Mafjar, Palace, view of hall. c.30 m square. AD 724–743.

semi-circular carpets fill eight apses along the sides. The panels contain ornamental designs, almost purely geometric, with sparing use of floral elements. Some of the patterns had formed part of the mosaic repertory since Hellenistic or Republican times: a perspective maeander runs across the chord of one of the apses, a great shield of triangles occupies the central circle, executed with a magnificence seldom seen in earlier examples. But the majority belong in the decorative vocabulary which had become common among the Palestinian and Jordanian mosaicists during the previous three centuries: complicated carpets of interlace, floral *semis*, rainbow-style mats of zigzags or chevrons. If many of the elements are previously familiar, the effect is very different. Each panel

footnote 42 (cont.)
Ettinghausen, 'The Throne and Banquet Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar', in *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic world* (Leiden 1972), 17–65, with convincing arguments against Hamilton's interpretation of the hall as a bath. Further bibliography in E. de Loos-Dietz, 'Les mosaïques à Khirbat Al-Mafjar près de Jericho', *BABesch* 65, 1990, 123–8. The tesserae of the mosaic are exclusively of stone.

forms an area of repetitive design, without variation of the filling elements; what strikes the eye is a series of pure patterns of line and colour. On the other hand, the division of the room into so many such carpets (approximately corresponding to the main architectural divisions) prevents any hint of monotony, and stresses instead the ornamental richness. The interlaced patterns are of especial complexity, some based upon concentric circles of loops, others with repetitive rows of multiple knots and twisted squiggles. The liking for panels of repetitive abstract ornament echoes the similar use of such panels in the stucco ornament of the palace; these in fact share several patterns with the mosaics, especially those based on interlace, though they also make greater use of floral and figured elements. The absence of such elements in the pavement of the hall is not a sign of an impoverishment of the mosaic repertory; it is a deliberate expression of taste by those who commissioned the work.

In the north-west corner of the building is a small



221 Khirbet el-Mafjar, Palace, apse of *dīwān*.

apsidal room, sumptuously decorated with both mosaic and stucco: a princely audience room or *dīwān*.⁴³ The mosaic in the main part of the room uses elements from two of the principal groups of designs found in the hall: a rainbow-style grid and an interlooped border. The entire floor of the raised dais in the apse is occupied by the only figured mosaic of the whole ensemble, emphasised all the more by the contrast with the abstract nature of the rest (figure 221). A huge fruit tree, against a white ground, occupies most of the semi-circle; beneath it on one side two gazelles browse peacefully, on the other a lion rends a third gazelle. All the elements here belong in the Graeco-Roman and early Byzantine repertory, but there is a sureness of design and an elegance which are seldom found in

the work of the previous three centuries. The great tree dominates, its foliage rendered with an admirably successful schematisation in successive layers of colour, from yellow through green and blue to black. The animals have a vitality which is also the product of effective schematisation: a very expressive outline, a vigorous calligraphy which conveys, through the careful selection of detail, the ferocity of the lion's attack, the pathos of the dying gazelle. The difference in quality from contemporary church mosaics is doubtless due in part to the superior status of the patron, either the Caliph himself or his

⁴³ Hamilton, *ibid.*, 63–7, 337–9, pls. LXXXIV, LXXXIX, XCIII, and frontispiece; Ettinghausen, *ibid.*, 44–7.

heir.⁴⁴ But it also reflects the character of the art of the conquerors, in which a naturalism derived ultimately from Graeco-Roman art was transformed to serve a new poetic purpose. The craftsmen who achieved this were trained in an almost millennial heritage, still vital enough to adapt to new aesthetic directions and requirements; the western tradition blended with the art of the east in a short-lived but brilliant synthesis.

⁴⁴ Hamilton, *ibid.*, suggests al Walīd ibn al Yazīd, Hisham's nephew and, briefly, successor; cf. also Hamilton, 'Khirbat al Mafjar: the bath hall reconsidered', *Levant* 10, 1978, 126–38. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (cit.n.40), 545–77, prefers to attribute it to Hisham himself.

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Greece: the Imperial period

I

Chapters 1 and 2 traced the history of mosaics in their homeland, Greece and the Greek cities of Asia Minor, down to the late Hellenistic period in the first century BC. The unbroken line of development ended with the decline of Delos, as a consequence of its devastation in the Mithridatic War in 88 BC, followed by sack by pirates in 69 BC. The rest of Greece suffered very badly in the Roman Civil Wars of the late Republic, and the first centuries BC and AD represent a period of economic hardship and poverty in most of the region; only in the later first and second century AD did a real revival take place.

The study of mosaics of the Imperial period in Greece suffers from other problems. In the past many archaeologists in Greece had little interest in the Roman period, which was often seen as one of decadence; attention was paid to the great public buildings of the cities of Roman Greece, but domestic architecture, where mosaics are mostly found, attracted little attention. This attitude has now changed, but the majority of earlier finds are almost entirely lacking in archaeological documentation. In recent years many mosaics have been discovered as a result of rescue excavations, carried out in a hurry and under severe restrictions, and published only briefly. Corpora covering the (very numerous) pavements of early Christian buildings have appeared; but there is nothing equivalent for the earlier Roman period, and there have been as yet few synthetic studies.¹ In consequence, the lack both of dates securely established by external criteria and of relative sequences is even more marked here than in most other provinces. Philippe Bruneau, in an article written in 1975, claimed that it was barely possible to distinguish between mosaics from the

first four centuries of the Empire. This has been challenged by Gisela Hellenkemper Salies, who has attempted an overview of the development prior to the fourth century AD in comparison with that of other parts of the empire. Her framework is convincing in its broad lines, but needs further study to support and refine it; and much remains controversial.²

The central questions concern continuity over the 'dark' years of the early Empire. Did the mosaic workshops of Greece and the islands remain in existence after we lose sight of them in the early first century BC, and can the mosaics of the Imperial period be regarded as a direct continuation of Hellenistic traditions? To what extent were they influenced by trends and fashions current in other parts of the empire? Were the Greek craftsmen and patrons essentially conservative, faithful both from training and inclination to the traditions of the past, as Bruneau believes, and impervious especially to developments in the west?³ These questions have been posed for other branches of art also; but mosaic was less exposed to official initiatives than, for instance, sculpture, and should be more indicative of private taste.

Very few mosaics in Greece can be dated with any certainty between the decline of Delos and the early second century AD. On our present evidence this seems indeed to have been a period of poverty, when it is likely that, in most areas at least, there ceased to be the supply of commissions needed to keep workshops in operation. Isolated finds may show the survival of the craft at an artisan level, sometimes in forms that had long passed from fashion. For instance on Thasos a mosaic of mixed pebbles and irregular chips, with a simple dark-on-light design of a *crater*, Erotes, and dolphins, is apparently dated to the first half of the first century AD.⁴ The survival of Hellenistic traditions is usually thought

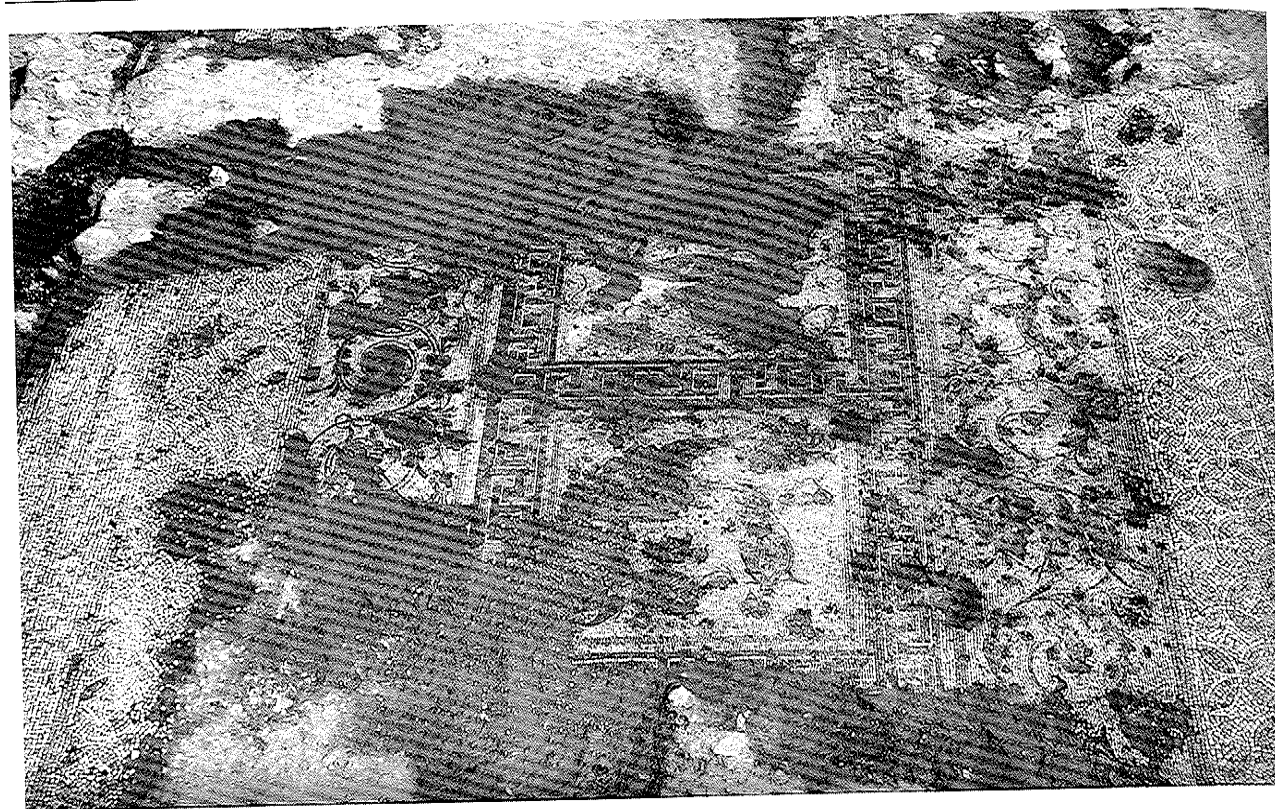
¹ A Franco-Hellenic study group of mosaics in Greece was formed in 1990, with the intention of covering the whole development from the earliest mosaics to the early Christian period; see *BCH* 119, 1995, 791–2. For the early Christian mosaics see below, note 31.

² Bruneau, *ANRW*; G. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken in Griechenland', *BjB* 186, 1986, 241–84. S. Waywell, 'Roman mosaics in Greece', *AJA* 83, 1979, 293–321, pls. 45–52, offers a catalogue of a representative selection of mosaics from fifty-four sites, with a limited analysis of their decoration and figured subjects. A catalogue of

mosaics with human figures, with full bibliography, is given by G. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Κατάλογος ρωμαϊκών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων με ανθρώπινες μορφές στον ελληνικό χώρο', *Hellenika* 26, 1973, 216–54, pls. 4–32.

³ Bruneau, *ANRW* esp. 341–5.

⁴ B. Holtzmann, O. Picard, *BCH* 98, 1974, 792, fig. 5, without details of the evidence for the date. Salzmann, 64, 119 no. 141, pl. 74, 1–3, rejects the date, but M. Picard assures me (verbally) that it is securely established.



222 Corinth, Anaploga Villa, mosaic *in situ*. Panels in Archaeological Museum, Corinth. Lower panel 0.95 m × 0.84 m. Perhaps late first to early second century AD.

to be attested by a 'villa' in the Anaploga district of Corinth, which contained a room decorated with sophisticated polychrome mosaics⁵ (figure 222). Three panels (one-and-a-half surviving) containing still-lives of birds and fruit were set in a border of perspective meander; glass tesserae were used extensively in both border and figures. This in turn was surrounded by a border with an inhabited scroll, while a simple outer border contained intersecting circles. The figured panels (which recall Campanian paintings), the use of polychromy, the three-dimensional meander and the naturalistic scroll, all suggest Hellenistic prototypes. Material from beneath the floor gave a *terminus post quem* of the third quarter of the first century AD; there is no evidence to indicate how long afterwards it was laid, but it is normally ascribed to the last quarter of that century. However there are no parallels for it at this date, and Hellenkemper Salies argues that it should rather be placed in the third century AD, when a revival of many of these 'Hellenistic' features is

attested, both in Greece itself and in other parts of the empire.⁶

On the other hand, a substantial number of mosaics testify to the presence in Greece of a very different tradition: the all-over black-and-white design, geometric or figured. The best known of these comes from the great hall of a bath at Isthmia, near Corinth⁷ (figure 223). Bands with white motifs on black divide the surface into a series of large square and rectangular panels. The squares contain simple all-over black-and-white ornamental patterns, the two central rectangles have marine scenes of Nereids riding on Tritons. The figures are manifestly related to the Italian silhouette style, and composition and ornamental motifs also descend from Italian forebears; a date in the middle to second half of the second century AD seems likely. Nothing here belongs in the Hellenistic tradition; it appears that Italian fashions have been exported wholesale to Greece.⁸

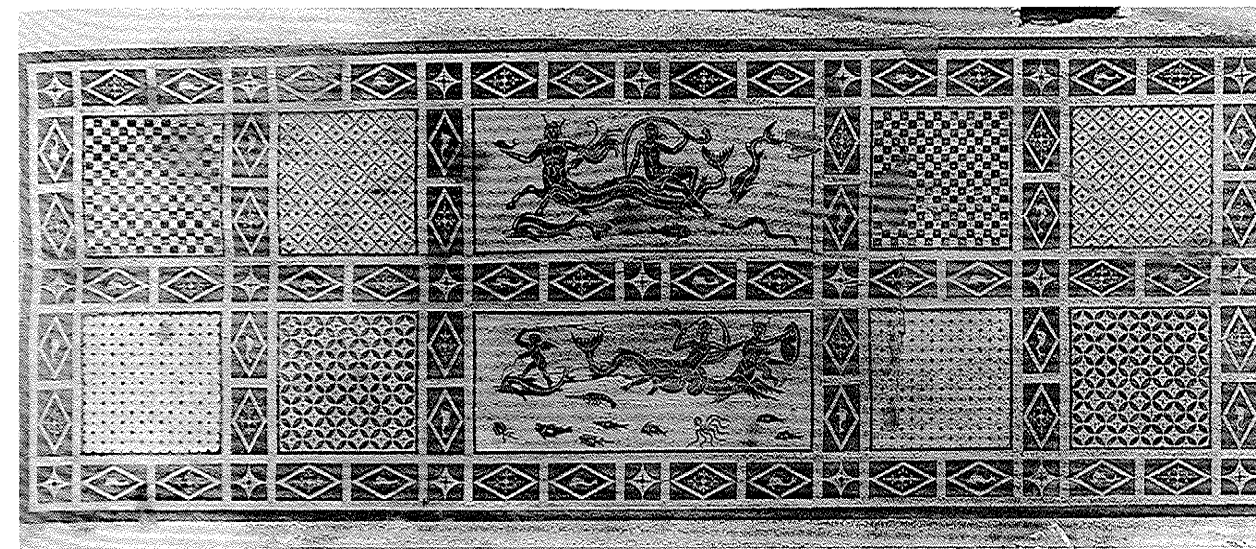
Pergamon dated to the second century AD show some similar characteristics (below, ch.13, n.5), which make a late first to early second century date more convincing for the Anaploga mosaic.

⁷ P. Packard, 'A monochrome mosaic at Isthmia', *Hesperia* 49, 1980, 326–46, pls.97–101.

⁸ Packard, *ibid.*, 328, 345–6, claims to see the survival of some Hellenistic elements, for instance the use of figured panels rather than all-over figured scenes, but these can be paralleled in Italy too: see Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken' (cit.n.2), 258–60.

⁵ S.G. Miller, 'A mosaic floor from a Roman villa at Anaploga', *Hesperia* 41, 1972, 332–54, pls.65–73. She stresses western influence and resemblance to Campanian mosaics and paintings, rather than direct continuation of Greek Hellenistic traditions.

⁶ Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken' (cit.n.2), 278–9; as usual there are few external criteria for dating any of the Greek mosaics which she attributes to this trend. For the revival of three-dimensional effects in the third century in other parts of the empire, see above, ch.5, section 11; ch.10, n.7. Recently discovered mosaics from



223 Isthmia, Baths, great hall, black-and-white mosaic. 20.20 m × 7.80 m. Probably mid- to second half of the second century AD.

A related group adopted the Italian all-over black-and-white designs, but introduced a limited use of coloured detail, usually red; these may be compared with the three- and four-colour mosaics found in several of the western provinces.⁹ The Kladeos Baths at Olympia, constructed around or soon after AD 100, contain several three-colour mosaics with simple geometric patterns¹⁰ (figure 224). A richer design decorates the central hall, with an all-over pattern of peltae surrounded by concentric borders: red and light blue are added here to the black, violet, and white used in the other mosaics. The pelta pattern is characteristically western, though the slight emphasis given to its centre (through a change of colour) and the multiple borders that surround the floor may suggest lingering Hellenistic traditions. Other rooms in the baths contained pavements of marble *crustae* with tesserae filling the interstices between them: a type common in Pompeii and elsewhere in Italy in the first centuries BC and AD.¹¹

It has become clear, therefore, that in Greece, as in many of the western provinces, mosaics developed in the early Empire under extremely strong Italian influence, most probably to be explained by the migration of craftsmen and workshops from Italy. It is hardly accidental that this black-and-white or limited polychromy style is found above all in baths, likewise a Roman or Italian fashion, at

least in the form they took in the first to second centuries AD. They are also most frequent in cities with a strong Roman element, such as the colonies of Patrai (Patras) and Corinth (or its environs), though they are not confined to them. How early they were introduced remains doubtful; a black-and-white mosaic from Philippi in Thrace has been assigned to the Augustan period, but without any compelling grounds.¹² Parallels, together with the few secure dates that exist, suggest that their widespread adoption was a feature of the second century AD. They do not always copy Italian prototypes slavishly, and local characteristics certainly remain to be identified; but evidence for continuity of Hellenistic traditions is lacking. If the normally accepted date for the Anaploga mosaic is correct, it represents a rare exception.

The use of fully polychrome mosaic was established in Greece by the mid-second century, though the black-and-white style evidently co-existed with it for some time. Extensive figured decoration was also in use by this date, with individual motifs set in compartments in the common western manner. Evidence for this may be seen in the floors of the Villa Dionysus at Knossos in Crete, which was probably constructed in the early Antonine period.¹³ Three pavements here contained designs of Dionysiac busts or masks set in the compartments of a

⁹ Cf. chs.5, n.4; 9, n.11.

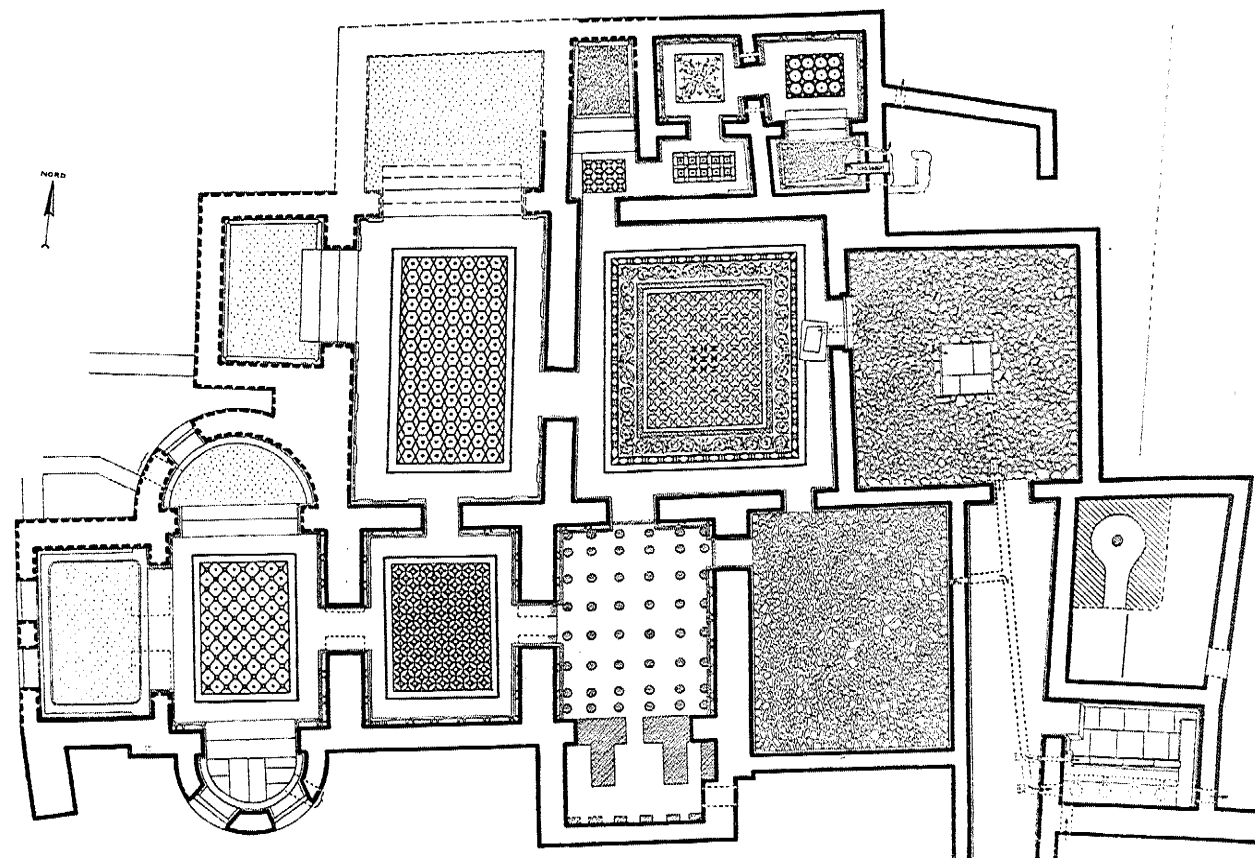
¹⁰ H. Schleif in *IV. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia* (Berlin 1944), 57–69, pls.22, 25, 27–31; R. Eilmann, *ibid.* 93–6, for the date. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken' (cit.n.2), 261–2, suggests an Antonine date (perhaps too late?).

¹¹ Cf. ch.4, n.4.

¹² P. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine* (Paris 1937), 357–8, pls.LII–LIII; the buildings of the Antonine Forum above it provide a

terminus ante quem, but the Augustan attribution seems to depend on preconceptions about the style of the mosaic. For other black-and-white or limited polychromy mosaics, see Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken' (cit.n.2), 259–62, with refs.

¹³ E. Waywell, 'A Roman villa at Knossos, Crete' *Mosaic* 8, 1983, 11–13, figs.7–11; I. Sanders, *Roman Crete* (Warminster 1982) 51–3, 69, pls.13–14. Date: J. Hayes, *BSA* 78, 1983, 97–100, construction 'not earlier than the end of the reign of Hadrian', destruction c. AD 170–80.



224 Olympia, Kladeos Baths, restored plan showing mosaics *in situ*. Probably early second century AD.

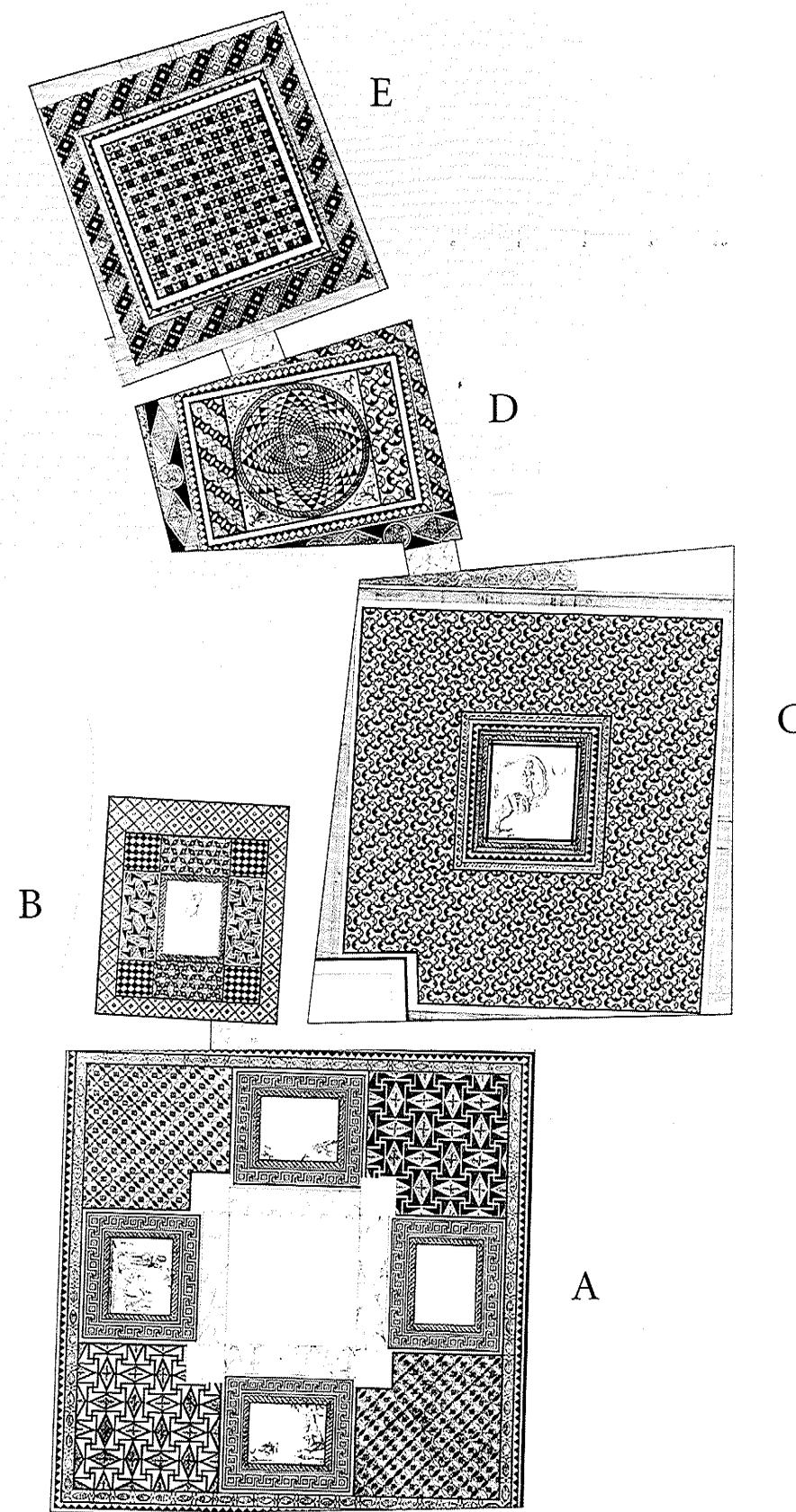
geometric framework, against a plain white ground. The figured motifs are polychrome, finely rendered and expressive; once they contrast with a predominantly black-and-white setting, but elsewhere the frame is also polychrome. The schemes – nests of hexagons, a radiating ‘wheel-pattern’, a ‘vault-pattern’ with a central circle surrounded by semi-circles – are typically western; all are designs originally worked out for ceiling decoration, and subsequently adapted to the floor. The ornamental motifs are equally western: for instance, another floor has a shield of triangles, in black-and-white, probably originally with a Gorgon’s head at the centre, a design with numerous Italian antecedents.¹⁴

Much closer to the Hellenistic tradition, at first sight, are the mosaics of the Roman Villa at Corinth (figure 225). Room A here contained four small panels (c.1.15 m ×

0.95 m), one on each side of a central pool. They had broad frames of maeander and guilloche, and contained figured scenes; the surviving two show pastoral scenes in a landscape, conventionally pictorial in composition and execution. Two other rooms (B and C) contained single figured panels, Europa and the Bull and a standing Dionysus, again heavily framed, set at the centre of geometric patterns. The excavator, in 1930, ascribed them to the Hellenistic period, struck by (superficial) parallels with Delos and Pergamon; recent commentators have placed them in the middle or second half of the second century AD.¹⁵ Italian elements, similar to those discussed in the previous examples, are to be seen here too: the panel with Europa is surrounded by an all-over pattern of peltae, and another room (D) contained a Dionysiac head at the centre of a shield of triangles. But other aspects of composition and ornamental repertory show influence from the eastern side of the Mediterranean. Close parallels for some of the ornamental motifs may be found in Syria, and the use of contrasting ground colours for some of the designs points in this direction; so does a tendency to break up some of the geometric patterns into smaller compartments. The use of the small figured panels may

¹⁴ Hellenkemper Salies, ‘Römische Mosaiken’ (cit.n.2), 269; Waywell, ‘Roman mosaics’ (cit.n.2), 304–5, with refs.; the design becomes very popular in Greece.

¹⁵ T. L. Shear, *Corinth v. The Roman Villa* (Cambridge, Mass. 1930), 19–26, pls.1–11; Waywell, *ibid.*, 297 no.17, pl.47, figs.16–19; Hellenkemper Salies, *ibid.*, 265–6, with refs., arguing for an Antonine date.



225 Corinth, Roman Villa, drawing showing mosaics *in situ*. Probably mid- to second half of the second century AD.

be seen as part of the same trend: the importation of eastern fashions, which leads to a revival (rather than a survival) of the *emblema*-type composition.

In other mosaics in Greece which are probably to be placed in the late second or early third centuries further elements appear that recall Hellenistic traditions but are probably derived from the influence of Syrian workshops. These include three-dimensional effects and the use of a dark ground in both geometric designs and figured scenes. The latter may be seen in another house in Corinth, the Mosaic House next to the South Basilica. The main room is covered by a guilloche maeander enclosing a central rectangular panel and five smaller square panels. These contain marine subjects set against a dark ground; the figures are naturalistically modelled, with strong *chiaroscuro* effects, lively movement, and a sense of volume.¹⁶ The neighbouring room has a simpler design – a grid of guilloche with a large central rectangle and two squares at either side; the figure scenes here have a white ground, and are considerably less well executed. The main subject is the triumph of Dionysus in an unusual form, approaching in his chariot over the waves: exactly the same composition has recently been found in a mosaic of much better quality at Dion in Macedonia, obviously based on the same prototype.¹⁷

In the later second and third centuries the use of mosaics became more widely diffused. They are found both on the mainland and on the larger and more prosperous islands, in cities and country villas (though the latter have been little studied in Greece), and come from public structures as well as private houses. The vagaries of publication mean that some of the most important complexes are not well known; and chronology can in most cases be only approximate. Ornamental designs are characterised by ever-growing complexity. The ornamental repertory derived from Italian sources is retained and enriched, and all-over patterns of types current in the contemporary west are common. At the same time motifs and patterns with parallels in Syria continue to attest to the influence of eastern fashions. The development of a

specifically Greek ornamental repertory from these elements remains to be traced.

New tendencies occur in the treatment of figured scenes, recalling the experiments in composition seen in the African provinces and other parts of the west, but which are very rare in Syria until a much later date. How early they appeared in Greece cannot yet be established; they were certainly present by the later third century, but may have begun as early as the late second. The mosaics from Kos with amphitheatre scenes discussed below, for instance, combine diverse figures and scenes in friezes within a single frame; a few isolated setting elements (groundlines, landscape features) are scattered over a neutral ground.¹⁸ Big figure panels which cover a substantial part of the floor with a single scene also appear. On a floor from Thessalonica the greater part of the room is occupied by figured scenes, enclosed by a common outer border. Within this, they are further subdivided into separate scenes; the largest shows Dionysus discovering the sleeping Ariadne (figure 226), two others contained Ganymede and the eagle, and Apollo pursuing (probably) Daphne. These are undoubtedly based on long-established prototypes, and create an initial impression of classicism, with well-modelled figures and fine nuances of shading. But the big Dionysus panel in particular shows ambiguities in the treatment of the third dimension; rocks and trees are piled up behind the body of Ariadne, but the spatial relationships of the other figures to these landscape elements are equivocal.¹⁹

Neither in ornamental repertory nor in methods of composition, therefore, do the Greek mosaicists reveal an enduring conservatism and faithfulness to Hellenistic traditions. Rather, they conform to the broad lines of development that can be observed in much of the rest of the empire. An initial receptiveness to Italian fashions, expressed in the black-and-white style, gave way to a revived taste for polychromy, with ever more lavish ornament, often in extensive all-over patterns. Contacts with the east, specifically Syria, gathered strength in the late second and third centuries; these led to the return of

it, when published, one of the most important centres for the study of Roman mosaics in Greece.

¹⁶ Below, ns.22, 23.

¹⁷ M. Karamanoli-Siganidou, *ArchDelt* 20, 1965, 82 (1967), 410–11, pls.459–61; Waywell, 'Roman mosaics' (cit.n.2), 303–4, no.53, pl.52, figs.45–7. The late second/early third century date suggested there seems much too early; see Hellenkemper Salies, 'Römische Mosaiken' (cit.n.2), 279, n.213, who attributes it to the 'Constantinian classicism' of the fourth century.



226 Thessalonica, mosaic of Dionysus and Ariadne. Archaeological Museum, Thessaloniki MΘ 6733. 2.10 m × 1.20 m. Perhaps first half of the fourth century AD.

three-dimensional ornament, centralised compositions, individual panels, architectural or landscape settings, and naturalistic treatment of vegetal motifs. The taste for these might indeed be seen as a revival, presumably conscious, of older traditions, part of the wider 'Greek renaissance' of the second century AD. But it must be noted, first, that a similar revival can be found in other parts of the western empire, for instance in Gaul;²⁰ and secondly that it co-exists with new developments, such as experiments with different ways of handling figure scenes which treat the floor as a unified two-dimensional surface. Finally the figures themselves only sometimes display the traditional characteristics which are found in the best Syrian work of the second and third centuries (and even much of the fourth): careful modelling with small tesserae, correct anatomy and foreshortening, finely shaded gradations of colour or strong contrasts of *chiaroscuro*. By the third century many figures on the Greek mosaics display instead a tendency to linearity, to a limited range of colours applied with little gradation, and to inorganic rendering of form; in this respect too they are often closer to contemporary western work.

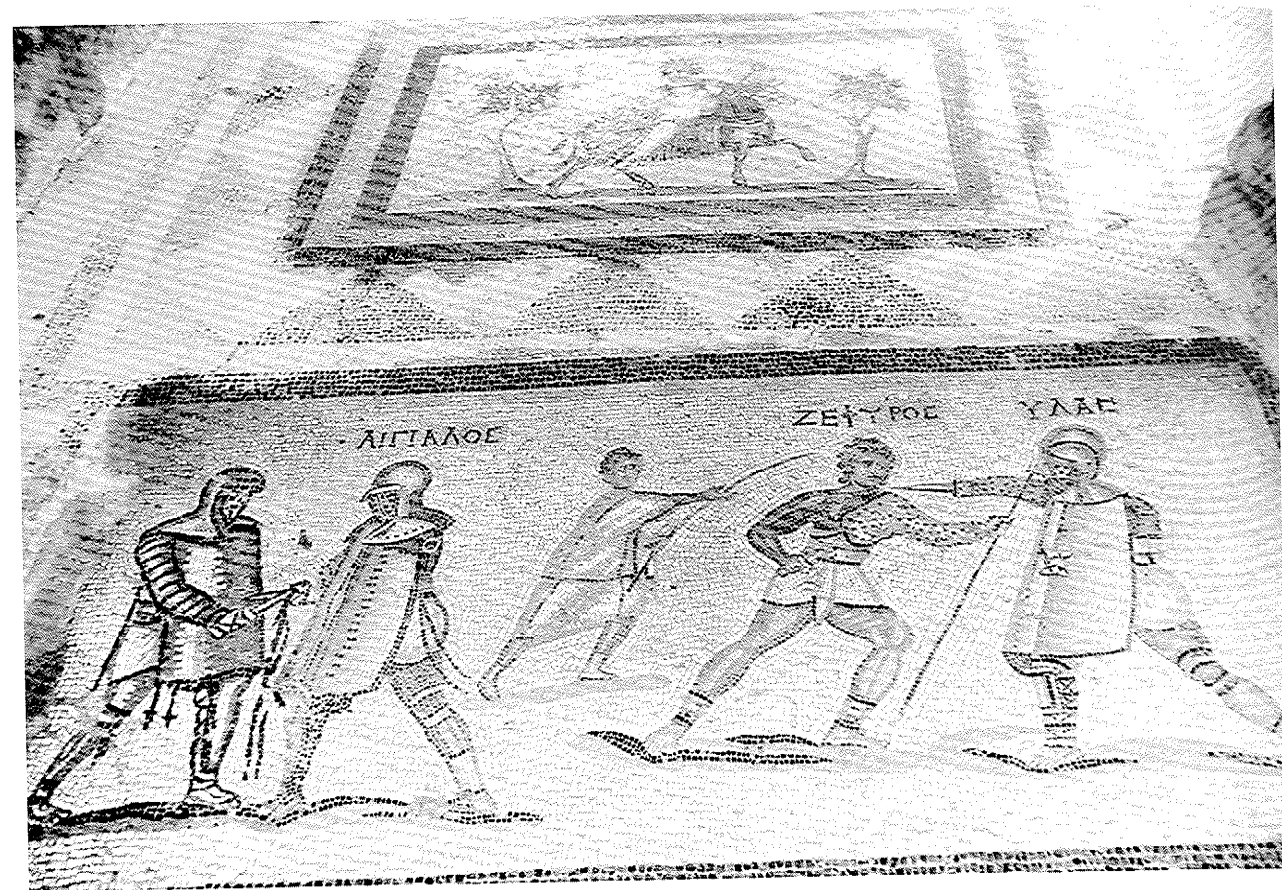
²⁰ Above, ch.5, section II.

²¹ A recently discovered villa at Eva in Arcadia, attributed to the second-century millionaire sophist Herodes Atticus, contains a rich collection of mythological mosaics. Among them, alongside much

II

These are all features in which the training, background, and talents of the craftsmen are likely to have played a determining role. The initial introduction of Italian black-and-white mosaics must clearly have been due to the popularity of Roman fashions among the patrons; but thereafter there is little chance of distinguishing what part the tastes of the patrons played in opting for a more 'western' or 'eastern' style of mosaic. However in the selection of figured themes the patrons are indeed likely to have contributed, though the range of subjects within a workshop's repertory was of course also a factor. Here too, the Greek mosaics from the three centuries under consideration by no means present a picture of unvarying conservatism and faithfulness to the traditional repertory. Mythological scenes are indeed common. For the most part they belong to the standard range of stories and figures repeated endlessly and in all media throughout the Roman Empire, though there are a few more inventive rarities; even among these it is possible to find some examples of influence from the Latin world.²¹ Typically 'Roman' subject-matter, derived from the amphitheatre, circus or hunting field, is less common but by no means

traditional Greek material, is the Hunt of Dido and Aeneas, clearly based on the Aeneid. Preliminary publications only are available: Th. Spyropoulos, *ArchéologiaPar* 323, mai 1996, 46–55; R. Tomlinson, *AR* 1995–6, 11–12, fig.2.



227 Kos, House of Silenus Mosaic, panel with gladiators. Perhaps third century AD.

unknown. These subjects were established in the repertory at least by the early third century, though the dates of most of the examples are uncertain. Scenes of gladiators – the most Roman of sports, but with a strong following in the east – appear on two mosaics at Kos (figure 227), and one found recently at Patras; on all they are identified by name (in Greek), and their equipment and tactics are differentiated.²² The wild beast hunts (*venationes*) of the arena are also found on Kos. On one pavement a long frieze of *venatio* scenes surrounds several panels with mythological scenes. In the frieze men and beasts are identified by name, and the scenes include remarkable stunts such as a man vaulting over a bull's back, another riding a bull which in turn attacks a boar and is attacked

by a bear.²³ Other episodes from the *venationes* appear on a floor at Chios, combined with panels illustrating hunts of smaller animals, presumably in the open, and with athletic scenes.²⁴ Athletes appear on a mosaic at Patras, divided into two long panels; below is a series of scenes from the *palaestra* (wrestlers, boxers, runners, victors with palms), above is a corresponding series of representations of theatrical and musical performances.²⁵ The combination suggests an allusion to the contests held at the great Greek festivals; but athletes in themselves belong in the general repertory of agonistic subjects derived from the games and spectacles, which are spread throughout most of the Roman world.

Theatrical scenes also may be found elsewhere in the

²² Kos: L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Paris 1940 (rep. Amsterdam 1971)), 191, no.191a; Robert, *Hellenica* 5 (1948), 98–9, pls.viii, ix; L. Morricone, 'Scavi e ricerche a Coe (1935–1943): relazione preliminare', *BdA* 35, 1950, 240–1, fig.75. Patras: I. Papapostolou, 'Monuments des combats de gladiateurs à Patras', *BCH* 113, 1989, 393–400, with a proposed date in the second half of the second or in the early third century. For the popularity of gladiatorial shows in the east, see the works of L. Robert cited above.

²³ L. De Matteis, 'Il bordo con *venationes* nel mosaico del "Giudizio di Paride" di Coe', *CCARB* 40, 1993, 111–24, with refs.; C. Kondoleon, in E. Gazda ed., *Roman Art in the Private Sphere* (Ann Arbor 1991), 109,

figs.5–8. A date in the late second century is generally accepted.

²⁴ A. Tsaravopoulos, 'A mosaic floor in Chios', in J. Boardman, C.E. Vaphopoulou-Richardson eds., *Chios. A Conference at the Homereion in Chios*, 1984 (Oxford 1986), 305–15, pls.v–ix; a date in the second half of the third century is suggested, perhaps too early.

²⁵ Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Κατάλογος ρωμαϊκών ψηφιδωτών' (cit.n.2), 244, no.52, pls.25, 26, with refs.; Waywell, 'Roman mosaics' (cit.n.2), 301, no.38, pl.50, figs.32–3: regrettably no detailed publication has ever appeared. The figure-style would suit a date in the late second/early third century; but the restorations make such a judgement very tentative.

empire, but the most detailed illustration of the theatre from the Imperial period is given by the mosaics from the House of Menander at Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, whose date is probably the late third century.²⁶ The *triclinium* here was decorated with a grid of ten panels, containing a portrait bust of Menander, the great poet of New Comedy, of Thaleia, Muse of Comedy, and of scenes from seven of Menander's plays, as well as (rather mysteriously) Socrates with Simmias and Kebes, the protagonists of Plato's *Phaedo* (figures 228, 229, 230). Scenes from four further plays of Menander decorate the portico in front. They are identified by their titles, almost always with an indication of the act from which the episode comes; those in the *triclinium* also have the characters identified. They show invariably three actors, wearing masks and comic costume, and occasionally also minor non-speaking characters, and they illustrate a central moment of the action. The scale is small (the panels average around seventy centimetres square), and the execution is not fine, so that details are often obscure. Nevertheless, in many instances it has been possible for scholars to use the mosaics to clarify the action of plays which otherwise survive only in fragments. Two of the scenes represent the same plays that were illustrated, some three hundred and fifty years earlier, on the *emblemata* signed by Dioskourides of Samos at Pompeii: the *Synaristosai* ('Women at breakfast') and *Theophoroumene* ('The possessed girl')²⁷ (figures 44, 45). Despite the enormous differences in style, the former can be seen to reproduce the identical model as the Pompeian *emblema*, but in reverse.²⁸ The choice of subject here must be due to the patron, who wished to set before his guests evidence of his literary culture: illustrations of the works of one of the most popular playwrights of all antiquity, who was considered especially appropriate as entertainment at after-dinner symposia. Indeed, one may guess that readings and performances of the plays were

²⁶ S. Charitonidis, L. Kahil, R. Ginouès, *Les mosaïques de la Maison du Ménandre à Mytilène* (*AntK-BH* 6, Bern 1970). The date is based on a destruction layer of the house, apparently to be dated around AD 300. Stylistic and iconographic features of the mosaics make it difficult to date them much earlier than this; the editors suggest the end of the third quarter of the third century. L. Berczelly, 'The date and significance of the Menander mosaics at Mytilene', *BICS* 35, 1988, 119–26, has argued for a date in the late fourth century. The evidence from the excavation has never been published, and it is not therefore possible to test the validity of the *terminus ante quem* proposed by the editors. Further excavations in 1975 revealed two more panels with masks in the peristyle, and a long panel with fish and fishers, which would certainly fit better stylistically with a date in the late



228 Mytilene, House of Menander, *triclinium*, panel with bust of Menander. 0.63 m × 0.72 m. Probably late third century AD.

intended to take place in the room itself. The Socrates scene asserts also his devotion to philosophy, but perhaps with no more solemn significance than that recitations from Plato also took place after dinner.²⁹

A patron at Sparta also chose to place his literary tastes on display, in a huge mosaic from a building of unidentified character.³⁰ Figures of the Muses, the customary patrons of culture, were placed in a central panel,

fourth century (E. Tsirivakos, *ArchDelt* 30, 1975, B2 (1983), 314, pls.218–19).

²⁷ Above, ch.3, n.28.

²⁸ See below, ch.18, section IV, n.51, for the question of models.

²⁹ See Plutarch, *Mor.* 711d–712b for this fashion (at a somewhat earlier date), as well as for the popularity of Menander as symposium entertainment.

³⁰ Ch. Chrestou, *ArchDelt* 19, 1964, B1 (1966), 138–41, pls.138–40; Waywell, 'Roman mosaics' (cit.n.2), 303, no.49; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Κατάλογος ρωμαϊκών ψηφιδωτών' (cit.n.2), 249–50, pl.29b; E. Theophilidou, 'Die Musenmosaik der römischen Kaiserzeit', *TrZ* 47, 1984, 254–9, no.40, figs.6–8; G. Neumann, 'Alkibiades', *AA* 1986, 103–12. The style suggests the fourth century.

229 Mytilene, House of Menander, panel with *Synaristosai*.230 Mytilene, House of Menander, panel with *Theophoroumene*.

231 Sparta, portrait of Alkibiades. Archaeological Museum, Sparta. c.1.20 m square. Perhaps fourth century AD.

surrounded by a series of panels with portrait busts identified by name. There survive three lyric poets, Sappho, A(l)kman, [Ana]kreon, and, rather surprisingly in this company, the Athenian statesman Alkibiades (figure 231). Further panels included personifications of Day and Night (*Nyx* and *Hemer(a)*), and the Sun-god Helios, as well as very damaged hunting scenes. The inclusion of Alkibiades suggests a conscious attempt to look back to the glories of the great age of Greece, celebrating both poets and leading historical personalities.

In sum, then, some Greek mosaics from the Roman period explicitly demonstrate attachment to Hellenism, and to the traditional values of Greek culture. But the number is not great, and is at least balanced by those that chose fashionable subjects from contemporary culture.

III

The mosaics of the early Christian period in Greece, from the mid-fourth to the late sixth century, have been better published and studied than those of the preceding centu-

ries.³¹ The distinction is somewhat artificial; there is no abrupt interruption, and in many places secular buildings (houses, villas, and baths) continued to be decorated with mosaics alongside the very numerous pavements of Christian churches. The overall evolution is clearer now than in the previous period, and it is possible to distinguish different regional groupings and to establish lines of contact and relationships with other areas.³² Mosaics from this period in the regions of northern Macedonia, which belonged to the same province (eastern Illyricum) as the neighbouring parts of modern Greece, have also been well published, and allow the area to be studied as a homogeneous entity.³³

Greece now belonged, politically and culturally, to the world of the eastern Mediterranean. Occasional parallels with Italy and North Africa recall her earlier role as intermediate between east and west; but the resemblance to the mosaics of Syria and Palestine is much stronger, and the overall evolution follows very much the same lines as that studied in the previous two chapters. However the Greek workshops developed their own individual characteristics, often with a distinctive repertory of designs not found elsewhere.

As in other parts of the eastern empire, ecclesiastical mosaics of the late fourth and first half of the fifth centuries are marked by a preference for pure geometric designs, avoiding the use of figures. Few secular pavements survive from this period, so it is not clear whether they too shared in this austere taste. The geometric patterns sometimes take the form of all-over 'carpet-patterns', covering extensive areas without interruption; alternatively the floor may be broken up into large panels with emphatic borders. Comparatively sober at first, they became more elaborate in the course of the fifth century. Animals and plants made their way tentatively into the compartments of geometric designs; by the second half of the fifth century they were common, and human figures

reappeared. To the late fifth and first half of the sixth century belong a number of pavements with rich decor combining a wide variety of figured motifs with elaborate ornamental settings. The subjects include animals, birds, fish, still life motifs such as baskets of fruit, a few humans bearing offerings or engaged in rustic activities, and occasional personifications such as the Seasons or the Rivers of Paradise; they are usually set into a grid, or the compartments of a more complicated design, against a plain ground. A grander set piece, with a symbolic subject such as peacocks or stags drinking the waters of life may occupy a larger panel in a central position, and is often richly coloured with brilliant glass tesserae. A good example of this type of ecclesiastical decor may be seen in a basilica at Delphi, probably to be placed in the late fifth or early sixth century.³⁴

The mosaics of Basilica A at Nikopolis in Epirus are attributed by inscriptions to the bishop Dometios in the second quarter of the sixth century.³⁵ Most of the church is decorated with the usual type of geometric designs and interlooped patterns, containing animals, birds, and plants, schematic but lively in colour. The apse of a chapel is emphasised by rows of frontal peacocks, their splendid tails spread, standing within an arcade around the outer curve, while a vine scroll fills the central segment. More unusual is the decoration of the two transepts right and left of the apse, which are both designed with a central figured panel surrounded by multiple borders. In the northern transept the panel contains a landscape with birds flying and grazing among fruit trees, and is framed by a band of birds in interlooped circles, then by an outer border with fish and sea creatures on a bluish background of waves (figure 232). An inscription explains that it shows the Ocean flowing around the Earth, which bears all that breathes and crawls. In the south transept a more enigmatic panel has a similar marine outer border, and within it a vine scroll where hunters attack beasts. In the central

³¹ *Syntagma* 1; *Syntagma* 11; M. Spiro, *Critical Corpus of the Mosaic Pavements on the Greek Mainland, Fourth/Sixth Centuries, with Architectural Surveys* (Diss. New York 1975, New York 1978); J.-P. Sodini, 'Mosaïques paléochrétiennes de Grèce', *BCH* 94, 1970, 699–753; Sodini, 'Compléments', *BCH* 95, 1971, 581–4.

³² Cf. P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'I mosaici pavimentali paleocristiani in Grecia', *CCARB* 31, 1984, 13–75; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Τὰ παλαιοχριστιανικά ψηφιδωτά δάπεδα τοῦ Ἀνατολικοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ', *ACIAC* x 1980 1, 361–444; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'The mosaic pavements of the Aegean islands during the early Christian period', *CCARB* 38, 1991, 33–65.

³³ R. Kolarik, 'The floor mosaics of eastern Illyricum. The northern regions', *ACIAC* x 1980 1, 445–79.

³⁴ *Syntagma* 11, 194–7 no.129, pls.337–51; Spiro, *Critical Corpus* (cit.n.31), 229–51 nos.82–3, pls.240–86. For related mosaics in other parts of central Greece, see Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, *ACIAC* x 1980 1, 396–400; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, *CCARB* 31, 1984, 42–4.

³⁵ E. Kitzinger, 'Studies on Late Antique and Byzantine Floor Mosaics, I. Mosaics at Nicopolis', *DOP* 6, 1951, 83–122; Spiro, *ibid.*, 425–61 nos.150–5, pls.457–532; G. Hellenkemper-Salies, 'Zu Stil und Ikonographie in den frühbyzantinischen Mosaiken von Nikopolis', in E. Chrysos ed., *Nicopolis 1, Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Nicopolis (23–29 September 1984)* (Preveza 1987), 295–310, figs.1–12.



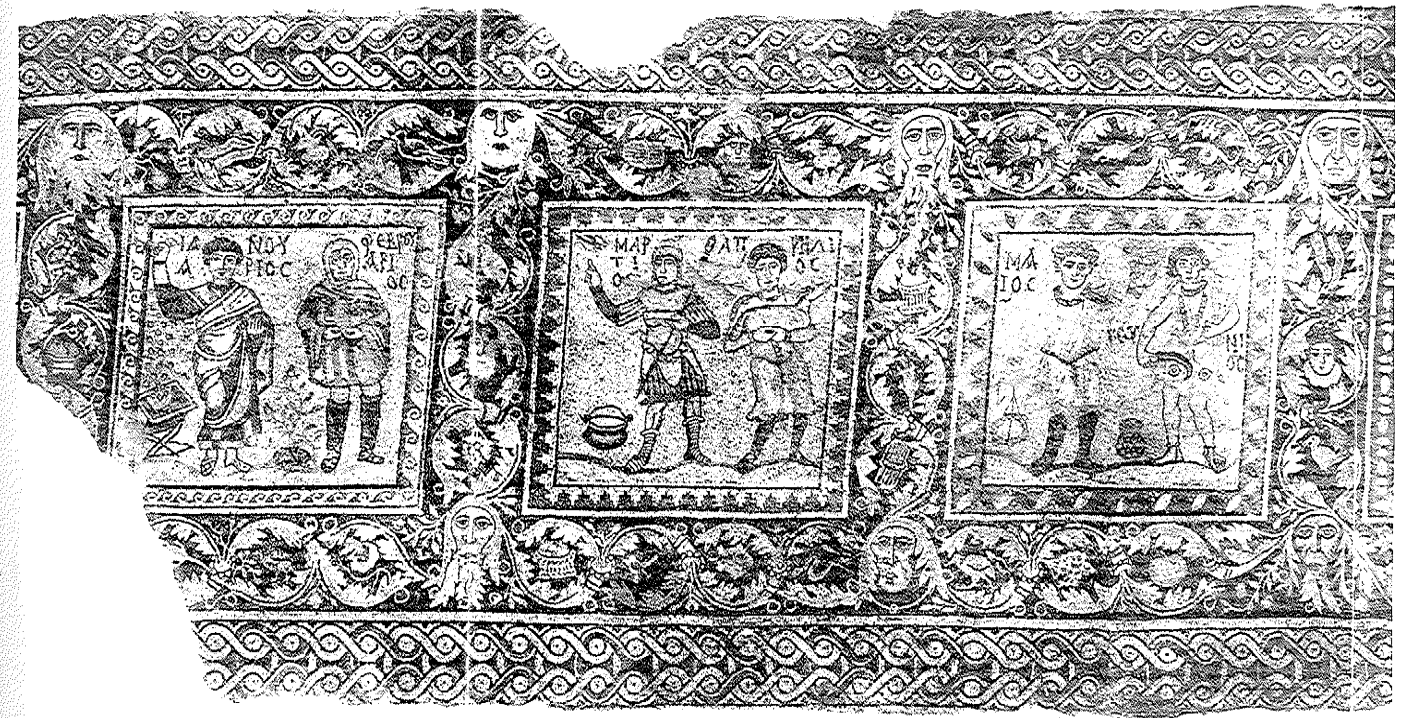
232 Nikopolis, Basilica A, north transept, panel with inscription of Dometios. 3.01 m × 2.35 m. Second half of the sixth century AD.

panel appear two large hunters with their dogs, supporting a panel for an inscription; this, which would presumably have explained their significance, is damaged, and no satisfactory interpretation of their presence here has been found.³⁶ The most remarkable aspect is the picture-like quality of the two transept panels, which replace the common compartmentalised designs by more structured scenes set in their own enclosing frames. It looks like a revival of earlier methods of composition; the tendency can be seen elsewhere in sixth-century mosaics, and seems to reflect a reaction to the more abstract designs of the previous century, though these were by no means abandoned.

Secular buildings were evidently decorated by the same workshops as the ecclesiastical buildings and share many features with them, but sometimes show the survival of an older repertoire. The most remarkable is the house in

Argos known as the Villa of the Falconer, assigned to the first half of the sixth century.³⁷ Mosaics decorated two sides of a peristyle and the main room opening off it. In the peristyle a series of panels, all more than a metre square, are framed in a fleshy acanthus scroll on a black ground, with masks at its points of intersection. Outer borders consist of various forms of interlace. The panels down one side contain standing figures of the Months, grouped in pairs and identified by their names, given in their Latin form but written in Greek (figure 233). They belong almost entirely to the repertoire of illustrated calendars current in the east in the later Empire, which discarded the earlier use, predominantly Latin, of religious feasts to represent the months in favour of scenes of typical rural activities. Most of the months are therefore shown as labourers engaged in rustic pursuits. However January is shown as a consul, distributing coins to inaugu-

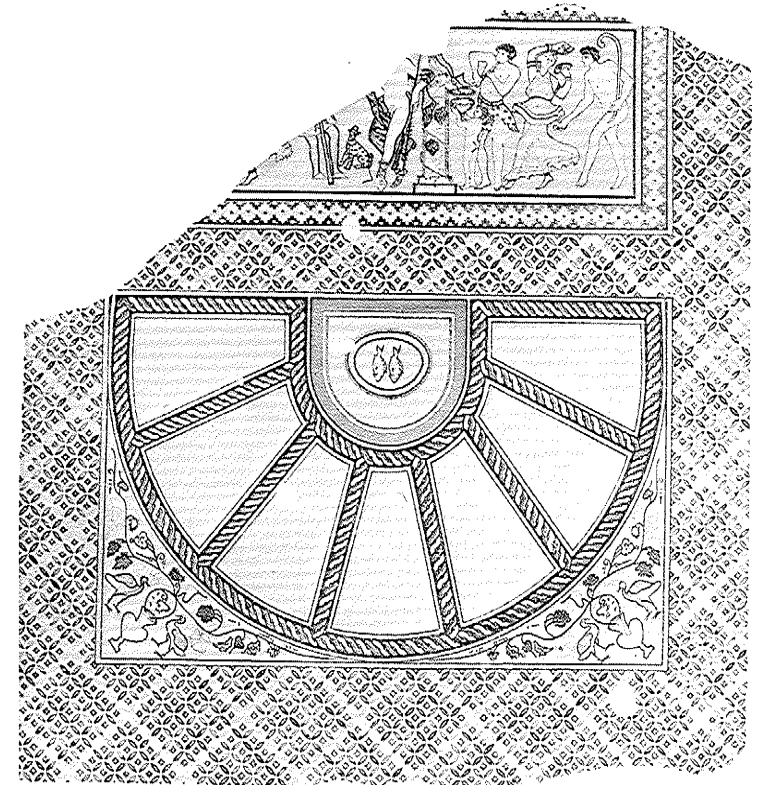
Ginouès, 'La mosaïque des mois à Argos', *BCH* 81, 1957, 216–68; C. O. Nordström, 'Some iconographical problems in the Argos mosaics', *CahArch* 26, 1977, 73–80; *Syntagma* 11, 53–6, no. 6, pls. 19–37, with a date in the second quarter of the sixth century, rather than the beginning as suggested by Åkerström-Hougen.



233 Argos, Villa of the Falconer, mosaic of Months, panels showing January to June. Archaeological Museum, Argos. Panels c.1.25 m square. Probably first half of the sixth century AD.

rate the New Year, when the consuls entered into office: this points to the traditions of the capital, Constantinople, and ultimately back to Rome. March is a warrior, after the god Mars, and with an odd blend of eastern and western elements. In the other wing of the peristyle the panels contain scenes of falconry and hare coursing. The sport of falconry was perhaps introduced to the Graeco-Roman world by the Vandals and other Germanic peoples in the late fourth and fifth centuries; it is rendered here with closely observed details, such as the falconer's gloved hand and the jesses attached to the falcon's legs. The hall opening off this wing is identified as a dining-room by the lay-out of the mosaics, which mark out the setting for the curved couch, the *stibadium*, and the semi-circular *sigmatable* enclosed by it. In front of this, in the open part of the room where entertainers would amuse the guests, is a panel with satyrs and maenads dancing around Dionysus, a scene which repeats age-old iconography (figure 234).

Despite the composition in traditional panels, the style is characteristic of the period. The Months stand frontally against an almost plain ground, a thin groundline under their feet, attributes floating beside them. The hunting scenes have more narrative action and the figures are lively, but the relationship of figures and landscape elements in space is inconsistent. Form and drapery are rendered by line, shading is almost completely absent. The Dionysiac figures repeat standard poses and gestures



234 Argos, Villa of the Falconer, drawing of room with *stibadium* and Dionysiac mosaic. Archaeological Museum, Argos. 6 m square.

³⁶ Kitzinger's interpretation (*ibid.*, 119–21) as Enoch and Elijah in the earthly paradise lacks parallels: see Hellenkemper Salies, *ibid.*, 304–7.

³⁷ G. Åkerström-Hougen, *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer at Argos. A Study in Early Byzantine Iconography* (Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae 4°, 23, Stockholm 1974); R.

derived from the earlier repertory, but these have become inorganic. All told, therefore, the scenes are a remarkable combination of the old and the new; some elements are still derived from the traditions of Graeco-Roman paganism, others look forward to the Middle Ages. Better (perhaps slightly earlier) work by the same workshop has been identified in another building near Argos, at Hagios Taxiarchis; here panels with busts of the Seasons were contained in a closely similar acanthus scroll, framed in turn by a band of perspective maeander³⁸ (plate 34). The colouring of the scroll is much more effective, and the masks that punctuate it more naturalistic, with three-

³⁸ Åkerström-Hougen, *ibid.*, 127–30, pls.x–xii, col.pl.8; *Syntagma* II, 56–8, no.8, pls.38–46, suggesting a date at the end of the fifth century.

quarter views and shading; but the huge-eyed hieratic Seasons themselves belong in the world of Byzantine saints. Here too two modes, the more naturalistic and the hieratic, appear side by side within a single monument; their co-existence is characteristic of early Byzantine art.

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Asia Minor, Cyprus, Constantinople

I

The cities of Asia Minor were some of the most prosperous in the Roman Empire, and their remains are among the most familiar to archaeologists. However attention has generally focused upon the public monuments, and in most areas little regard has been paid to domestic buildings. Probably as a consequence of this, the mosaics and other pavements of Asia Minor are little known, and very few sites have been published in detail.

As in Greece, the first question that arises is whether there was continuity in mosaic production from the Hellenistic period to the Roman. Unlike Greece, where the first centuries BC and AD were on the whole a period of poverty, the cities of Asia continued to flourish with only brief interruption. The search for continuity has therefore a better chance of success here, unaffected by economic factors. At present a continuous sequence of mosaics from the Hellenistic period to the Empire can be observed in only one city, Pergamon, and the publication of many of these is still preliminary.¹ The series begins with the very fine mosaics from the Palace, which presumably date from the first half to the middle of the second century BC² (figures 28, 29). Others from houses in the town have been ascribed to the late Hellenistic period, after the establishment of the Roman province of Asia (129 BC). They include some polychrome floors (or fragments of floors) with typical Hellenistic patterns, such as perspective maeander, crenellation border, *trompe l'œil* cubes in perspective; parallels can be found in Delos and in late Republican Pompeii³ (figure 235). Alongside these, and sometimes in the same floors, elements appear which have more exclusively Italian parallels: all-over

black-and-white patterns, an *opus sectile* panel at the centre of a tessellated floor, or a pavement of *signinum*. It looks as though the influence of Italian fashions was already being felt in the first century BC, even while Hellenistic traditions were still maintained. Whereas the main direction of artistic influence at this time is normally thought to run from the Greek world to Rome, house-owners in Pergamon adapted their decor to conform to the taste of the new masters of their world, perhaps in response to the large numbers of Italians who had settled on the coast.⁴

The Italian influence is clearly recognisable on some mosaics in Pergamon from the Imperial period; they show mostly simple geometric patterns, black-and-white with occasional touches of red or yellow, taken from the standard Italian repertory. More complex origins lie behind those in a peristyle building near the sanctuary of Demeter, called Building Z.⁵ The originally Hellenistic building was rebuilt and redecorated, apparently soon after AD 100, and all the mosaics are ascribed to this phase; it was destroyed in the second half or at the end of the second century. In the peristyle is a mosaic with a standard design of intersecting circles in three colours, found on other Pergamene mosaics of the Imperial period. Off the north side of the peristyle a rectangular room opens almost its whole width (figure 236). It has a mosaic with multiple borders, including wave band and perspective maeander, which frame a central carpet with a pattern of cubes in perspective. At the centre of this is a panel, framed by a band of egg-and-dart, showing a bust of the old Silenus holding the young Dionysus, on a black ground. The heads of the two figures are carefully rendered, with much use of chiaroscuro, whereas the bodies

¹ Cf. D. Salzmann, 'Mosaiken und Pavimente in Pergamon. Vorbericht der Kampagnen 1989 und 1990', *AA* 1991, 433–56; Salzmann, 'Mosaiken und Pavimente in Pergamon. Vorbericht der Kampagnen 1991 und 1992', *AA* 1993, 389–400; a full publication by Salzmann is in preparation.

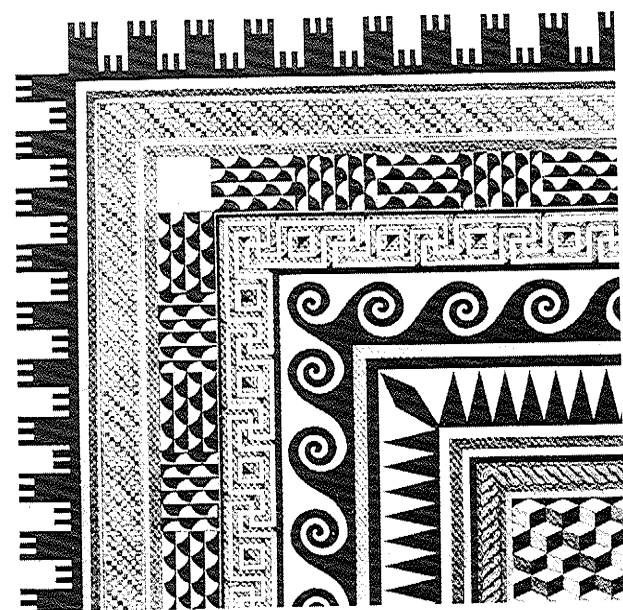
² Above, ch.2, ns.31,32.

³ E.g. the fragments from Peristyle House 2, room 9: D. Pinkwart, W. Stammenitz, *AvP* 14, *Peristylhäuser westlich der unteren Agora* (Berlin 1984), 98–103, pls.45, 46b, assigned to the second Hellenistic phase of

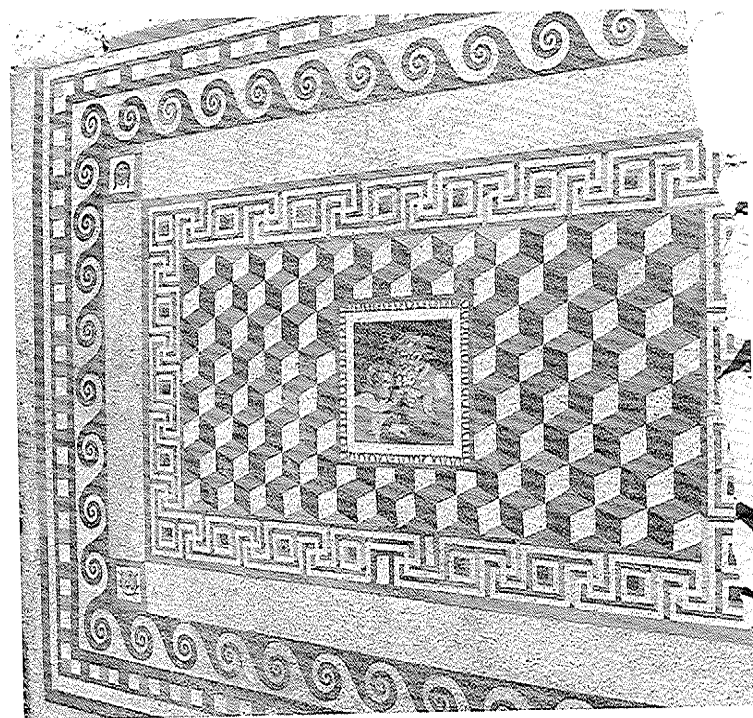
the house, 67–47 BC; rooms 37 and 38 of the House of the Consul Attalos, now dated by archaeological evidence to the first century BC: W. Dörpfeld, *AthMitt* 32, 1907, 183–4, pl.xvii; Salzmann, *AA* 1991, 440–4.

⁴ Salzmann, *AA* 1991, 437–9.

⁵ Salzmann, *AA* 1991, 449–52, figs.18–23; Salzmann, *AA* 1993, 389–94, figs.1–7. For the building, see W. Radt, *AA* 1991, 416–23; Radt, *AA* 1992, 349–63; Radt, *AA* 1993, 359–72; Radt, *AA* 1994, 408–26; for the date, Radt, *AA* 1993, 362, 372.



235 Pergamon, Peristyle House 2, room 9, drawing of reconstructed mosaic. 67–47 BC.



236 Pergamon, Building Z, mosaic of Silenus with child Dionysus. Room 8 m × 6 m; central panel 1 m square. Beginning of the second century AD.

and limbs are sketchily rendered with big patches of colour.

The mosaic is directly reminiscent of Hellenistic decorative schemes, as seen on many of the mosaics of Delos. The band of waves, the perspective meander, the egg-

and-dart frame, and the *trompe l'œil* perspective cubes all belong in the Hellenistic repertory. The central panel is designed in direct imitation of an *emblemata*; even the oblong shape of the room recalls Hellenistic 'broad rooms'. While many of these characteristics are found on mosaics of the Imperial period in various parts of the Roman world, the combination is exceptional. There is no doubt that the mosaic belongs to the Roman rebuilding, but it is tempting to see it as imitating a Hellenistic model.

Off the west side of the peristyle is another room with a well-preserved polychrome mosaic of high quality (figure 237). Here a broad zone of ornament on a predominantly dark ground frames a central carpet with a pattern of octagons outlined in guilloché. Within the octagons on a black ground are masks and Dionysiac animals, naturalistically modelled with tiny tesserae, many of glass. The overall effect is three-dimensional, suggesting a coffered ceiling, although none of the ornamental patterns themselves use perspective effects. This mosaic too looks back to the Hellenistic tradition in its three-dimensional character and use of a black ground, yet it does not recall Hellenistic prototypes as directly as the Silenus mosaic. The octagon pattern and the patterns used in the outer zone belong in the repertory of schemes worked out in the Imperial period, as does the use made of guilloché. This mosaic, then, may be placed in a current of more selective revival of older fashions, characterised especially by the use of black ground, of three-dimensional effects, and of fine figured designs, but combined with up-to-date ornament and compositional schemes. All three elements, the almost pure Hellenistic revival, the more austere Italian designs, and the more selective recreation of earlier fashions, apparently co-exist within a single phase of the building.

Elsewhere in Asia Minor the mosaics that can be dated to the first and second centuries AD show affinities with contemporary Italy and the west, rather than with the Hellenistic tradition or with developments further east. Comparatively few have been published, mostly unremarkable in quality; they come from the old Greek cities of the Aegean coast or its immediate hinterland. At Iasos, for instance, the so-called Villa of the Mosaics contains a series of black-and-white floors with simple all-over patterns, common in Italian mosaics of the second century AD. A small number of isolated figured motifs, such as dolphins or vases, are rendered partly in silhouette, partly in coloured glass tesserae; very slight touches of red

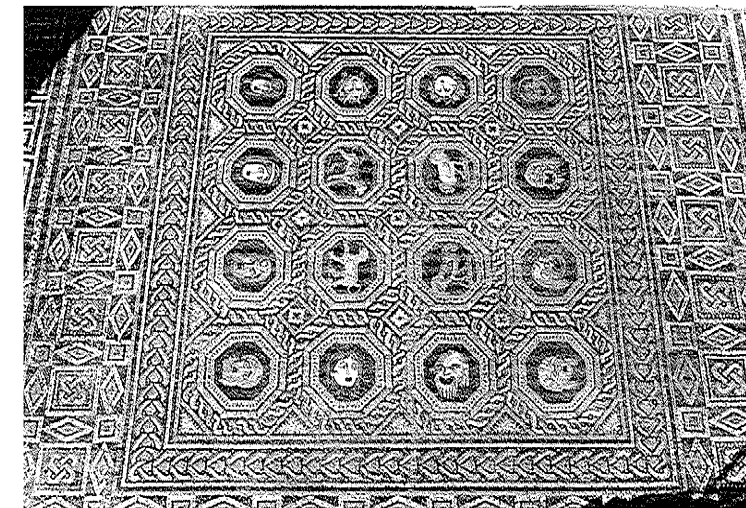
relieve the general bichromy.⁶ Similarly at Ephesos the earliest mosaics from the Terrace Houses (Hanghäuser) are simple black-and-white all-over geometric designs, with a very limited range of motifs.⁷ These black-and-white floors continue at Ephesos into the fourth and fifth centuries, in many cases repeating similar patterns; alongside them are also found three- and four-colour compositions, again with simple geometric designs. A handful of polychrome figured panels survive; though finely executed, they are conventional in composition and mostly in subject-matter, with figures or busts set against a white ground. In Dwelling 11 of Terrace House 2, for instance, one wing of the peristyle has a three-coloured mosaic with a simple pattern of intersecting circles, black, white, and ochre. In its centre is a panel with a polychrome scene of a Nereid riding a sea-horse led by a Triton; competent but conventional work (figure 238). Behind this opens a niche paved with marble, whose vault is covered with a mosaic showing Dionysiac figures among vine scrolls; its luxurious effect contrasts strikingly with the simplicity of the mosaic floors.⁸

Our present evidence suggests that mosaics in western Asia Minor were comparatively rare throughout the first three centuries of the Roman Empire; that they were conservative in design and limited in repertory, both geometric and figured; and that they were more closely linked to fashions in the western Mediterranean than to Syria. It may be that the plentiful supply of marble in this region, much of it highly decorative, led to a preference for *opus sectile* floors in the more prestigious settings, leaving mosaic to play a comparatively humble role. However the recent discovery of the very different mosaics from Building Z at Pergamon offers a warning that this account may be an oversimplification; in other cities too there may have been both more continuity from Hellenistic traditions and closer links with the Syrian centres than we are currently aware of.

⁶ D. Levi, *ASAtene* 47/8, 1969–70, 522–5, fig.64; F. Berti, 'I mosaici di Iasos', *CMGR* 111, 235–9, figs.2–8.

⁷ Jobst, *Ephesos* 1, 39–42, H2/SR 1–6, Mosaic 1, pls.65–73, ascribed to the second half of the first/beginning of the second century AD; 42–5, H2/SR 1, Mosaic 11, pls.72–7, ascribed to the second century. For doubts about many of Jobst's specific dates, see G. Hellenkemper Salies, *BjB* 180, 1980, 772–8, but the broader attributions are probably correct.

⁸ Jobst, *Ephesos* 1, 58–64, H2/SR 22, pls.98, 103–7. Jobst places the Nereid mosaic either in the late third/early fourth century or in the late fourth; the earlier dating, supported by Hellenkemper Salies (*ibid.*, 777), seems to me more likely. For the vault mosaics, which date to around AD 400, see below, ch.14, n.46.



237 Pergamon, Building Z, mosaic of masks. Room c.7.5 m square. Beginning of the second century AD.

In the late antique period, from the mid-fourth to the sixth centuries AD, the role of mosaic seems to have expanded. Figured scenes and motifs, set in much richer polychrome ornamental patterns, became more common at this date.⁹ Large areas of pavement in public or semi-public buildings were also covered with mosaic in this period, for instance several porticoes along streets and public buildings in Ephesos. These were covered with polychrome geometric designs, with occasional figured motifs inserted in them; they use looped and interlaced designs typical of late antiquity alongside older and more austere patterns.¹⁰ From the late fourth century onwards mosaics also began to be used extensively in Christian churches in this region; these too share in the general decorative *koine* of the eastern Mediterranean, and especially of the Aegean world.¹¹ The Synagogue at Sardis also has a mosaic pavement of the mid-fourth century, with complex geometric patterns incorporating donor inscriptions.¹²

Most of the south coast of Asia Minor is little known. It seems likely that in the more westerly parts the main links were again with the western Mediterranean, and with Greece. Further east the influence of Syria becomes

⁹ For example a villa in Halicarnassus: Hinks, *BMCat* 125–43, nos.50–6; C.T. Newton, *A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus, and Branchidae* (London 1862) 11.1, 280–310, pls.xxxix–xli. New Turkish–Danish excavations are briefly reported (by P. Pedersen) in M. Mellink, *AJA* 97, 1993, 122–3, figs.18–19.

¹⁰ E.g. the Stoa of Alytarches along the main street in front of the Terrace Houses: Jobst, *Ephesos* 1, 31–4, pls.38–50, proposing a date at the end of the fifth century. Jobst quotes numerous parallels both from Ephesos itself and from other sites such as Perge and Side.

¹¹ Above, ch.12, section III.

¹² G. Hanfmann ed., *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983), 168–78, figs.254–61, with refs.; *id.*, *BASOR* 187, 1967, 9–50, esp.32–46.



238 Ephesos, Terrace House 2, Dwelling 11, south wing, mosaic of Nereid and Triton. Panel 2.89 m × 1.39 m. Probably late third to early fourth century AD.

stronger, and is clearly to be seen on a group of mosaics from Cilicia, dating mainly from the third century. Antioch, only a short distance around the curve of the coast line, was the nearest major centre, which inevitably set the fashions.¹³ Christian mosaics in the more eastern parts of Asia Minor are also closely related to those of Syria. Geometric carpets with extensive use of rainbow pattern developed in the second half of the fourth century; animal carpets and inhabited vine scrolls are characteristic of the fifth and sixth. Among the rare examples of biblical subject-matter is the basilica at Mopsuestia (Misis) in Cilicia, which contains both a panel with Noah's Ark, surrounded by birds and beasts, and a frieze with scenes from the legend of Samson; an identification as a synagogue has also been proposed.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Budde, *Kilikien* 11; G. Hellenkemper Salies, s.v. Kommagene – Kilikien – Isaurien, *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* IV (1984), 319–22.

¹⁴ Hellenkemper Salies, *ibid.*, 324–47. Mopsuestia: Budde, *Kilikien* 1, with review by E. Kitzinger, *ArtB* 55, 1973, 140–2; E. Kitzinger, 'Observations on the Samson floor at Mopsuestia', *DOP* 27, 1973, 135–44; M. Avi-Yonah, 'The mosaics of Mopsuestia – church or synagogue?', in L. Levine ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem 1981), 186–90. Parallels for the ornamental designs indicate a fifth-

II

A much more substantial group of mosaics comes from the island of Cyprus. These cover a span from the early Hellenistic period (represented by pebble mosaics from Nea Paphos and Kourion) to the early Byzantine, though there is little from the early centuries of Roman rule. The main production began apparently in the late second century AD, a period of great prosperity in Cyprus. Numerous private houses decorated with mosaics have been excavated, which date from the late second to (probably) the early fifth centuries, as well as public buildings such as baths. Christian churches with mosaic pavements begin in the fourth century, and run through to the sixth or seventh. The lack of good marble in Cyprus means that *opus sectile* floors are rare; the absence of the more prestigious type of pavement may have encouraged the production of high-quality mosaics.¹⁵

century date, perhaps the second quarter, with the Samson mosaic possibly a little later.

¹⁵ Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 1–7, for a general survey. Pebble mosaics: *ibid.* 10–11, no. 1 (Nea Paphos), no. 2 (Kourion). Fuller discussion of figural mosaics in Nea Paphos and of Christian mosaic pavements in Daszewski, Michaelides.

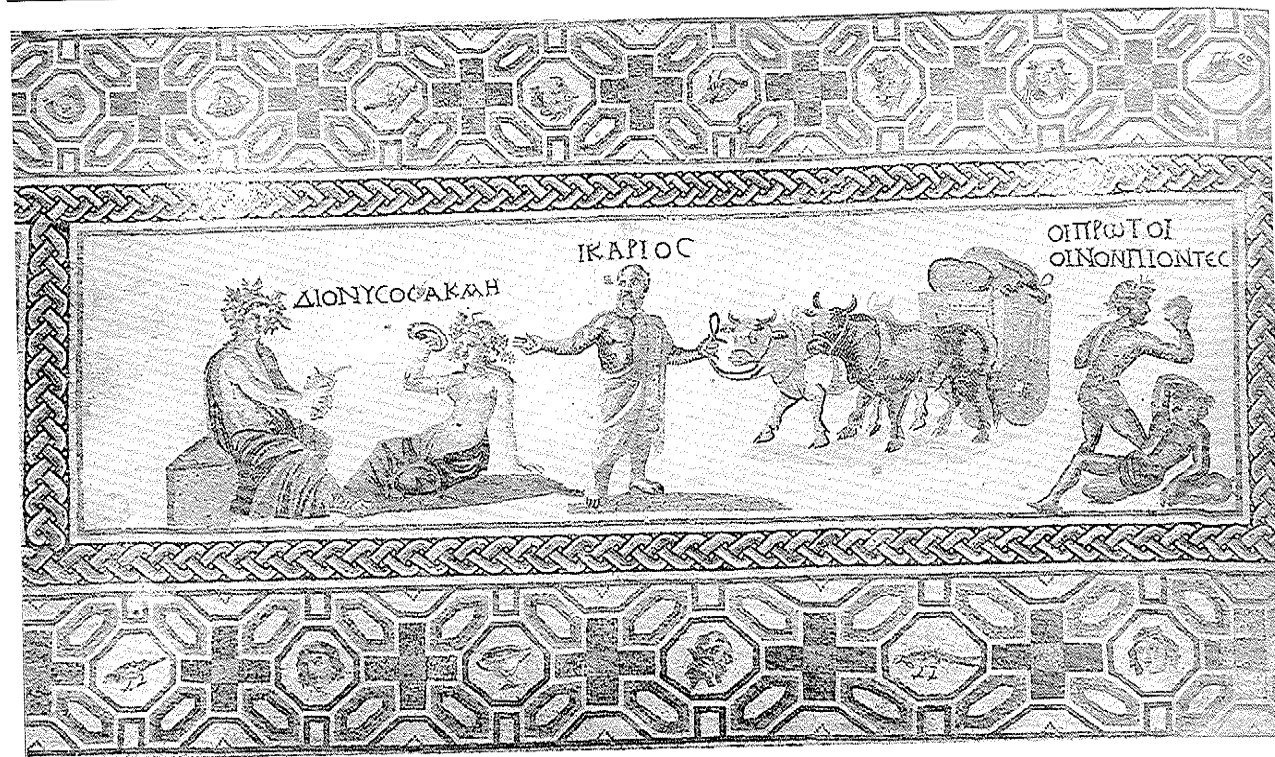


239 Nea Paphos, House of Dionysus, general view of *triclinium*; foreground panel showing Indian Triumph of Dionysus. Room 8.50 m × 11.50 m. Probably late second or early third century AD.

Roman houses with mosaics have been found principally in Nea Paphos, which until the mid-fourth century AD was the capital of the island. The most extensive decoration is that of a handsome peristyle house known as the House of Dionysus; mosaics pave the porticoes of the peristyle and eleven of the surrounding rooms.¹⁶ Almost all are polychrome, and the majority are figured, mostly with mythological subject-matter. In several of the smaller rooms a single framed figured panel is placed in the manner of an *emblema* at the centre of a geometric carpet. Three of the porticoes of the peristyle are covered with single panels running their whole length, and framed by a series of geometric patterns. The fourth portico, in front of the main reception room, contains four separate figured panels set within a wide geometric frame. The main room itself is decorated in the T+U composition characteristic of a *triclinium* (figure 239). Down the outside run broad bands with two different geometric designs; in the centre, surrounded by a leafy scroll, a long panel contains vines, vintage scenes, and birds, including a splendid peacock spreading its tail. The bar of the T is formed by another figured panel, set to face

those entering the room, showing the Indian triumph of Dionysus, who rides in his leopard chariot among his followers. It is closely linked, visually, with the four panels in the portico beyond, one of which also has a Dionysiac subject: Dionysus gives the gift of wine to Ikarios, who leads an ox-cart laden with wineskins. Behind him (a detail unique to this mosaic) are the two shepherds on whom he has tried out his new invention, collapsing drunkenly to the ground; they are identified by inscription as the first wine-drinkers (*hoi protoi oionon piontes*) (figure 240). The other three panels show Apollo and Daphne, Poseidon and Amymone, and Pyramus and Thisbe, the last pair identified by inscriptions; they share with other mosaics of the house a common theme of love, mostly unhappy. The Dionysiac scene has a more specific message for the viewer, a contrast between the right and the wrong use of wine. It forms an appropriate prelude to the mosaics of the *triclinium*, which stress the triumphant power of the wine-god and his beneficent gifts.

¹⁶ Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine*; Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 14–21, nos. 7–19, pls. 11–19, col. pl. xx1; Daszewski, Michaelides 18–45. For the date, see below, n. 19.



240 Nea Paphos, House of Dionysus, west portico of peristyle, panel showing Dionysus and Ikarios. 4.33 m × 1.11 m. Probably late second or early third century AD.

The subject-matter of the other three porticoes introduces a new theme. Long friezes show hunters facing a variety of wild animals, and other beasts attacking their prey; details make it clear that these are to be read as scenes of the *venationes* of the arena (figure 241). As in some of the mosaics in Greece, the contemporary 'Roman' world of the amphitheatre appears here side by side with more traditional mythological material. The patron uses his mosaic, perhaps to commemorate a spectacle which he himself has donated to the public, certainly to emphasise his interest in such spectacles and their importance in the society to which he belongs.¹⁷

In style and composition too the mosaics of the House of Dionysus combine elements from both east and west. In many respects they share in the decorative vocabulary of the Syrian mosaics, and have many parallels in nearby Antioch and in Cilicia. The geometric designs include both simple, more-or-less linear patterns in very limited polychromy, and more elaborate designs which gain their effect from the use of contrasting areas of colour. Three-dimensional mock-perspective effects also appear in some floors. The composition of most of the figured

¹⁷ Cf. C. Kondoleon, 'Signs of privilege and pleasure: Roman domestic mosaics' in E. Gazda ed., *Roman Art in the Private Sphere* (Ann Arbor 1991), 105–15; Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine* 271–314. For amphitheatre scenes in Greece, see ch.12, ns.22–24.

¹⁸ Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine* 61–75; cf. above, ch.5, ns.6, 7; ch.7,

pavements, with framed individual panels at the centre of geometric designs, is also characteristic of the Hellenistic tradition of the east. But there are other elements which do not belong to the eastern *koiné*. The hunting panels in the peristyle owe more than their subject-matter to western models. The long friezes contain figures interspersed with occasional setting elements (trees, rocks, a gateway from the side of the arena) against a plain white ground on which they cast shadows: these can be much more readily paralleled in the western tradition than in contemporary work in the east. Several of the mythological mosaics show a similar ambiguity in their use of the third dimension, with figures and landscape elements scattered over the panel with no sense of depth: for instance in the Dionysus and Ikarios scene. Even some of the geometric patterns belong to the western rather than the eastern repertory; for example, a multiple decor design whose closest parallels lie in Gaul and Tripolitania.¹⁸

The date of the House of Dionysus and its mosaics was for long a subject of controversy. The archaeological evidence has now been shown to give a *terminus post quem*

section v. However the use of polychromy in the House of Dionysus pattern is quite different from the western examples: the outlines of the designs are frequently traced in white, and the compartments thus formed are filled with contrasting areas of varied colour.

for the construction of the house in the early second century; it was destroyed, perhaps by an earthquake, at a date previously placed c. AD 200, but which might be as late as c.230. Recent studies suggest that the mosaics are likely to have been laid in a single phase only shortly before that destruction. Marked differences exist between the figure style of the various scenes; thus the figures in the mythological panels of the portico are skilfully handled, with strong chiaroscuro effects, while others, including the Triumph of Dionysus, are much more schematic and linear. But rather than representing variation in date, these may be assigned to differences in workshop or in the skills of individual craftsmen.¹⁹

The House of Dionysus mosaics cannot be fitted easily into the evolution known from any one major centre. Some features suggest very close workshop ties with Antioch, but there are also signs of a conscious choice by patron or craftsmen of elements derived from the west, perhaps through circulating models. It seems clear that the Cypriot workshops developed their own style, which drew on the traditions of both East and West; their strongest links are probably with the mosaics from the Aegean islands such as Kos.²⁰ Other mosaics of much the same period in Nea Paphos and other Cypriot towns give further evidence for this blending of elements.

The House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos is named after a fine scene of Orpheus and the beasts in its main room. The mosaics here are closely related to those of the House of Dionysus, and must be products of the same workshop; a date in the late second or early third century has been assigned provisionally, though the archaeological material on which this is based is not yet fully published.²¹ Across the top of the Orpheus mosaic runs an inscription, in Greek: . . .]OS PINNIOS RESTITOUTOS EPOIEI, '[?Gai]os Pinnios Restitoutos made <this>'. The name, though written in Greek letters, is Latin, and its form is that of a Roman citizen, with the customary three names. The verb used for 'made' could refer either to the mosaicist who actually executed the mosaic, or to the patron who commissioned it; the second explanation seems

¹⁹ Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine* 6–9, 316–9, quoting the study of the ceramic evidence by J. Hayes, *Paphos III, The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery* (Nicosia 1991), 200–12, which appeared to exclude any date after the late second century. The validity of this *terminus ante quem*, however, is questioned in the review of Kondoleon by G. Hellenkemper Salies, *JRA* 10, 1997, 524–36; in his comment appended there, J. Hayes now allows a possible *terminus ante* of c.220–30 for the laying of the mosaics.

²⁰ Above, ch.12, ns.22, 23.



241 Nea Paphos, House of Dionysus, peristyle, friezes with hunting scenes of arena. Probably late second or early third century AD.

more likely.²² In either case the Latin name attests to the presence of western elements here: either a wealthy Roman house-owner, who commissioned mosaics from the local workshop but might impose his own taste on their production, or, less probably, an immigrant mosaicist from the west. The taste for what is usually thought of as 'Roman' subject-matter is also exemplified, at a slightly later date, by two mosaic panels from a house in the neighbouring city of Kourion which show gladiatorial scenes; two pairs of heavy-armed gladiators fight, with their names written in Greek above them. Gladiatorial scenes on the mosaics of mainland Greece and the islands were noted in the previous chapter; the notion that such events were not popular in the Greek East has long been shown to be untrue. However they are not common on mosaics of the eastern Mediterranean, and it is likely that their occurrence reflects special commissions, or the presence of imported models, or both.²³

The most impressive figured mosaics found in Cyprus are also from Nea Paphos, from the House of Aion; they are dated to the second quarter of the fourth century, the late Constantinian period.²⁴ The design of the pavement

²¹ Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 12–14, with refs., col.pls.xix–xx; Daszewski, Michaelides 48–53, esp. 52, n.91.

²² See below, ch.16, n.33.

²³ Kourion: Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 22–4, nos.21–2, pl.x, with refs.; a date in the second half of the third century is proposed. For gladiator mosaics in the Greek world, see ch.12, n.22.

²⁴ W.A. Daszewski, *Dionysos der Erlöser. Griechische Mythen im spätantiken Cypern* (Mainz am Rhein 1985); Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 28–31, nos.27–31, col.pls.xxii–xxiv; Daszewski, Michaelides 56–70. A

in the main room shows that it was a *triclinium*; a U-shaped geometric band surrounds a central figured area, divided into three zones containing five separate panels²⁵ (figure 242). A long panel in the central zone shows the beauty contest between Kassiopeia and the Nereids (figure 243); this is a subject otherwise known only in Syria, where it is found at Apamea and Palmyra, and seems to illustrate a local Syrian version of the myth.²⁶ The other two zones each contain two panels: above are Leda and the Swan, and Hermes handing the infant Dionysus to the Nymphs (plate 35); below are a (damaged) Dionysiac procession, and Apollo ordering the punishment of Marsyas.

These scenes are big sumptuous pictures, very different from the rather sparse figured scenes of the House of Dionysus. The figures, about half life-size, are packed densely together, filling the space available with much overlapping. Landscape and setting elements help to create depth in some scenes: the Nereids swim over the sea, and water and rocks represent the Eurotas in the scene of Leda and the Swan. The colouring is extraordinarily rich, with bright blue, yellow, red, and purple tesserae used extensively in the drapery. Great attention is paid to the rendering of the bare parts of the body. The female nudes, conspicuous in the scenes of Leda and of the Nereids, are treated with a rosy opulence, enhanced by the use of worklines for the curving shapes of breast and stomach; male musculature is marked by strong chiaroscuro. Clusters of reddish-orange tesserae animate the faces; eyes are large and emphasised by dark lids and brows. Drapery is handled more formally, with striking contrasts of colour and heavy linear folds.

The panels create an appearance of classicism, which on closer investigation is superficial. The treatment of space is not consistent, the figures are often inorganic, many details are linear; nevertheless the overall impression is of a classicising elegance of style, typical of the so-called Constantinian renaissance. The closest parallels in mosaic are to be found in Syria, at Apamea and especially in a group of fourth-century mosaics from Shahba-Philippopolis.

footnote 24 (cont.)

well-preserved coin of Licinius I, datable between AD 318 and 324, embedded in the mortar foundations gives a *terminus post quem*; the mosaic is unlikely to be substantially later.

²⁵ The room as a whole measures 9 m × 7.6 m; the figured area is 3.9 m wide. Tesserae in the figured scenes average 2–5 mm.

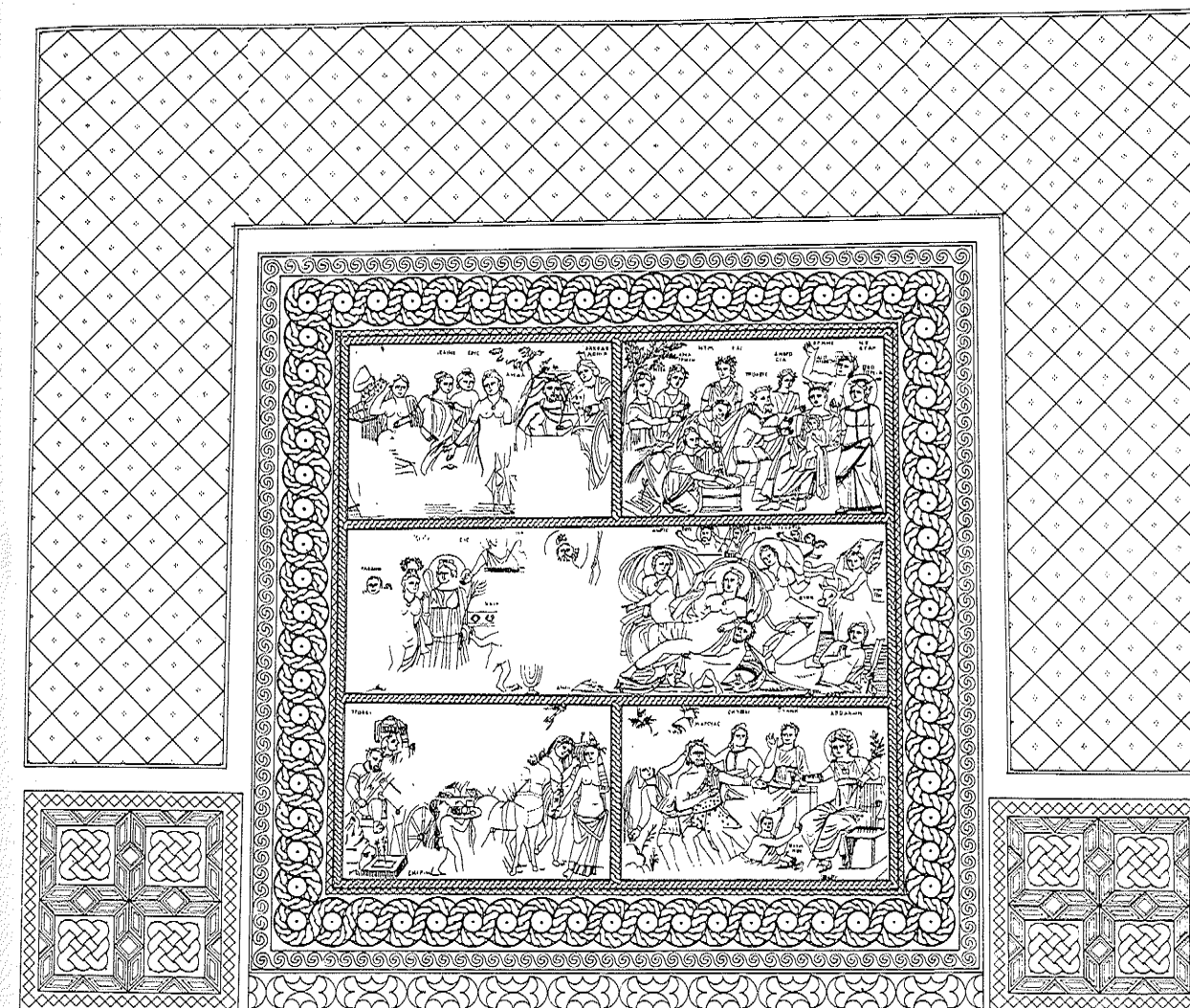
²⁶ W.A. Daszewski, 'Cassiopeia in Paphos – a Levantine going West', in *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium 'Cyprus between the Orient and the Occident'*, Nicosia, 8–14 September 1985 (Nicosia 1986), 454–70, and above, ch.10, ns.18, 23.

Unique in quality in Cyprus, the mosaics of the House of Aion may well be the work of a mosaicist imported from a Syrian metropolis. The Syrian influence persists over the next century, though the mosaics never again attain the same quality as those in the House of Aion.²⁷

The significance of the House of Aion mosaics has been the subject of much discussion. Inscriptions (unusually elegantly lettered) identify most of the figures, and show the presence of numerous personifications of abstract qualities in addition to the main characters. In the scene of the presentation of the infant Dionysus (plate 35), *Anatrophe* (Nurture or Upbringing) stands behind the Nymphs who will receive the child; *Ambrosia* and *Nectar* stand ready to provide the food of the gods; and *Theogonia* (Divine Birth: a unique personification) stands behind Hermes, who holds the baby. She and the baby both have a blue nimbus, as do many of the other divine characters. Hermes, seated almost frontally, holds the child with exceptional reverence, his hands veiled in a cloth; the old Silenus *Tropheus* (foster-father) bends with humility to receive him. Other scenes too contain details which enhance their solemnity and can be taken to imply a seriousness of content beyond the purely narrative illustration of myth. The central scene (figure 243) introduces Aion, god of eternal and unchanging Time, nimbed, crowned, and blue-bearded, as the judge in the beauty contest, while Zeus and Athena, Helios and probably also Selene, appear in the sky behind saluting Kassiopeia's victory. The excavator of the house, Daszewski, has interpreted the whole complex of scenes as expressing a profound theological message celebrating the epiphany and triumph of Dionysus as supreme god and saviour. The scenes where Dionysus does not appear show, in his view, the victory of cosmic order over the forces of wild nature; Kassiopeia is a personification of Beauty itself, interpreted as the embodiment of cosmic order. The mosaic then would be a document of paganism in the highly rarefied form, imbued with Neoplatonic ideas, which developed in late antiquity, to a considerable extent in conscious opposition to the success of Christianity.²⁸

²⁷ Apamea, Shahba-Philippopolis: above, ch.10, section 11. For later mosaics of Cyprus, see Daszewski, Michaelides 70–6 (pagan), 81–151 (early Christian).

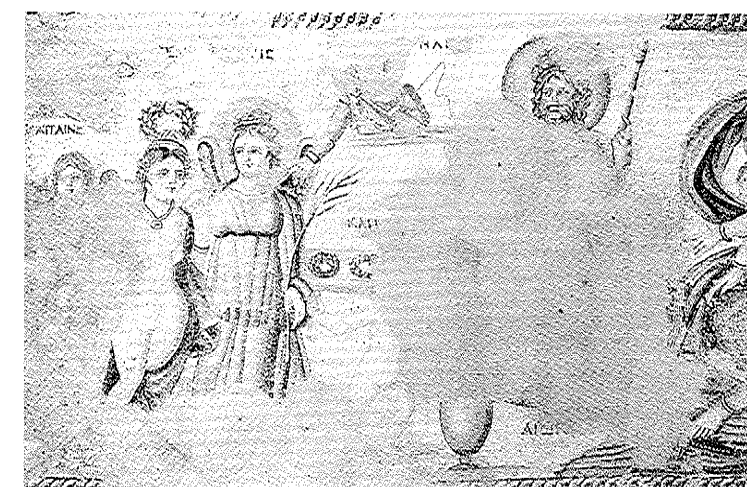
²⁸ Daszewski, Michaelides 68–70; Daszewski, *Dionysos der Erlöser*, 38–45; G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor 1990), 49–52. Cf. also J. Balty, 'Iconographie et réaction païenne', in *Mélanges P. Lévêque 1, Religion* (Paris 1988), 17–32, for a fuller interpretation in a Neoplatonic sense, with less emphasis on the role of Dionysus.



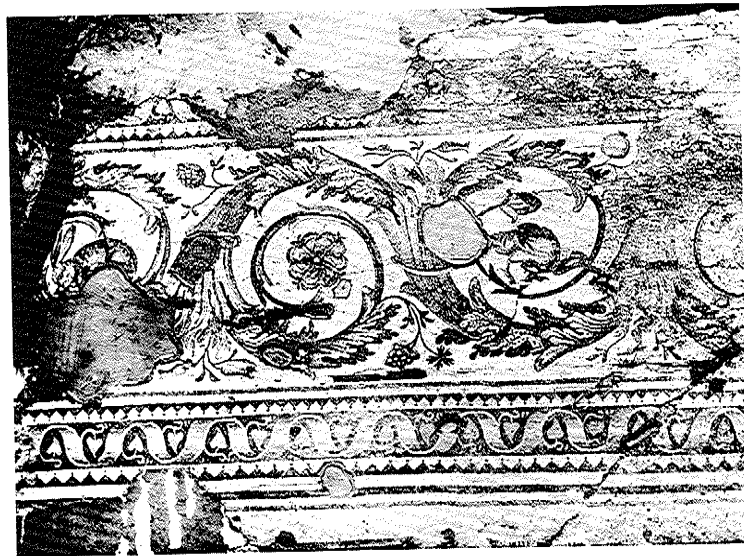
242 Nea Paphos, House of Aion, *triclinium*, general view of mosaics. Room 7.6 m × 9 m. Second quarter of the fourth century AD.

Not all commentators agree with an interpretation which ascribes such theological and philosophical profundity to the mosaic. It is also possible to interpret the mosaic on a more secular and superficial level, as a suitable decoration for a dining-room, which combines erotic themes, Dionysiac subject-matter, and allusions to music, with an opportunity for the beholders to display their learned culture in the interpretation of obscure details.²⁹ Such disputes are impossible to resolve: they illustrate the range of meanings which could be attributed to mythological scenes. Neoplatonic interpretations of myth, of the type that Daszewski proposes, were undoubtedly current in late antique paganism, and the mosaic does use the language of contemporary theological speculation. But we cannot know to what extent that language was under-

²⁹ See J. Deckers, 'Dionysos der Erlöser?', *RömQSch* 81, 1986, 145–72.



243 Nea Paphos, House of Aion, *triclinium*, Judgement of the Nereids, detail showing crowning of Kassiopeia. Entire panel 3.90 m × 1.29 m.



244 Constantinople, Great Palace, mosaics from peristyle, detail of border. First half of the sixth century AD.

stood either by the owner of the house or by the designer of the mosaic. This does not affect the fact that in these mosaics we see a very impressive reworking of mythological themes, most of them established in classical art for many centuries, to suit the visual language of late antiquity. The solemn, hieratic appearance of the scenes is the result of deliberate borrowing of many details from the art of the imperial court. The same source was also drawn on by the artists responsible for creating the iconography required by the new needs of the Christian church; hence the remarkable resemblance of the group of Hermes with the baby Dionysus to a Christian Epiphany scene. The mythological repertory was alive and flourishing in the Greek world of the mid-fourth century, and was capable of being adapted to many purposes, from the profound exegesis of philosophers and mystics to the elegant exhibitions of learning appropriate for a cultured dinner-party; indeed, it could well have served both purposes at the same time.

III

Constantinople, the new Christian capital of the eastern empire after Constantine, remains to be considered. Geography would suggest that its most natural links

would be with western Asia Minor and with Greece, but the few floor mosaics that have been found in Constantinople bear little similarity to those from either region. Most are commonplace work of little significance, which do not suggest the presence of flourishing mosaic workshops in the city.³⁰

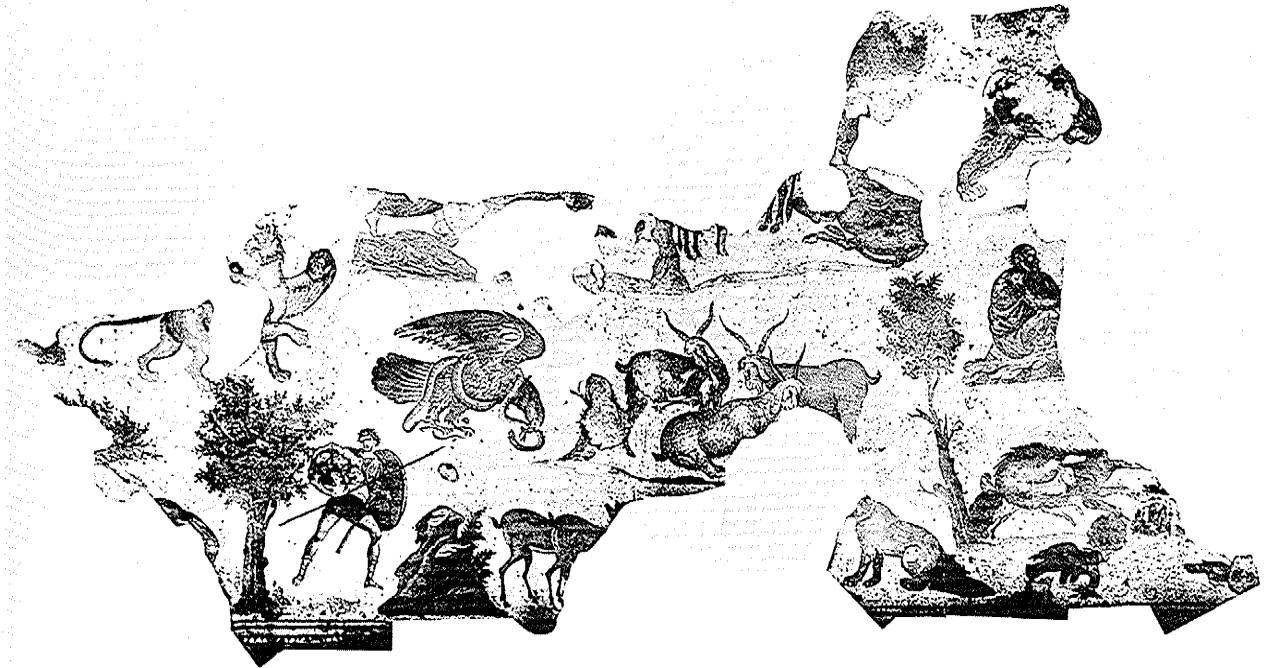
The exception is one of the most remarkable and controversial mosaics of the entire late antique period: the mosaic from the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors. Very little is known from archaeological sources of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople in the early Byzantine period; as the only surviving elements of its decoration the mosaics are therefore exceptionally important. They were discovered in excavations of the mid-1930s and early 1950s; since then, argument has raged over their date, over the identification of the building to which they belong, and over their interpretation.³¹

The mosaics decorated a huge peristyle (c.55.5 m by 66.5 m) south-east of the Hippodrome. Later alterations, which involved the laying of a marble pavement above them, have left them in fragmentary condition, but there are substantial remains from three sides of the peristyle. A border of acanthus scroll, of extraordinary naturalism and plasticity, encloses a number of masks which are also amazingly vivid (figure 244). The area within this has a plain white ground set in an imbrication pattern. On this a series of motifs or vignettes are set in four superimposed registers without formal separation between them; a few overlap from one register to the next, and provide the only linkage (figures 245, 246). The individual motifs are extremely varied. Animals form the largest single source of subject-matter; they range from peaceful groups to predators with their victims, and include some fantastic creatures such as griffins. Human figures appear in bucolic scenes, such as shepherds with their flocks and a boy tending geese (figure 247), in hunting scenes, and in genre scenes of daily life such as a woman nursing a baby or a man feeding his mule (figure 248). The circus and amphitheatre give some material: some of the hunting scenes are probably meant to take place in the arena, and one scene shows boys playing with hoops around the

Palast zu Konstantinopel', *BjB* 187, 1987, 273–306; J. Trilling, 'The soul of the Empire: style and meaning in the mosaic pavement of the Byzantine imperial palace in Constantinople', *DOP* 43, 1989, 27–72, figs. 1–78, pls. A–D. On the topography of the Great Palace, see W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), 229–37, with refs.

³⁰ Cf. G. Hellenkemper Salies, s.v. Konstantinopel II.a, *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* IV (1989), 614–25.

³¹ Original publication: G. Brett, in *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors. First Report* (Oxford 1947), 64–97; D. Talbot Rice ed., *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors. Second Report* (Edinburgh 1958), esp. 121–67. Recent studies with a review of previous literature: G. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Die Datierung der Mosaiken im Grossen



245 Constantinople, Great Palace, mosaics from peristyle, detail of north-west portico. First half of the sixth century AD.

metae of the circus. Some buildings are also shown, among them a water-mill, the first known representation of such an object.³² A very few mythological subjects are included: Bellerophon and the Chimaera, Pan carrying a Bacchic child. Although some scenes are composed as overlapping groups with their own sense of depth, and some include limited landscape features, for the most part the figures (even those belonging to a single group) are spread out against the white ground without formal connection, and there are no links, formal or thematic, between one group and the next.

The individual figures, some nearly life-size, are finely executed with small tesserae and a wide range of colours and tones, including glass.³³ Many of them are very naturalistic, with skilful foreshortening and a convincing sense of volume which contrasts strongly with the abstract, two-dimensional character of the composition. Not all are equally organic, and there is a tendency to stylisation which turns details into pattern; but there is a great feeling for vigorous movement. The liveliness and naturalism, so different from the conventional view of Byzantine art, has struck all observers, and has contributed to the perplexity over their date. The original excavators proposed the early fifth century, in part because the classical figure style was thought incompatible with a later date. But increasing knowledge of early Byzantine secular art has shown that naturalism is by no means necessarily a mark of an early date. Most recent commentators have accepted archaeological evidence that appears to give a

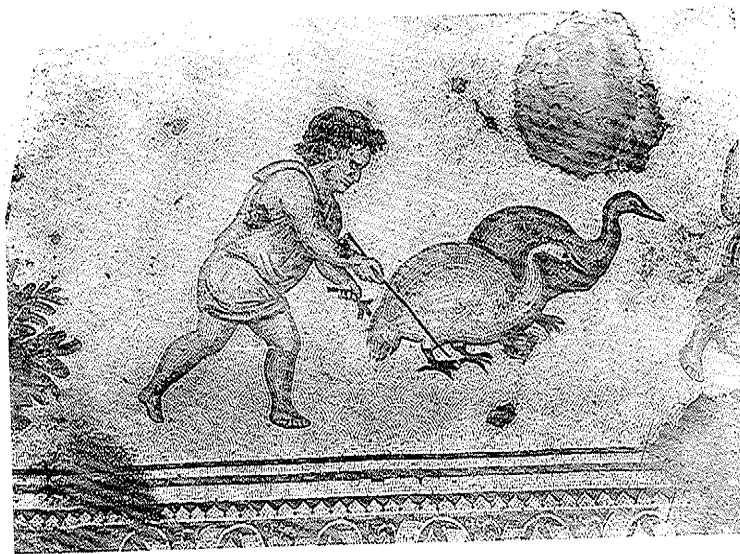


246 Constantinople, Great Palace, mosaics from peristyle, detail of north-west portico. First half of the sixth century AD.

terminus post quem of c.530 for the laying of the mosaics; and have placed them either in the second half of the sixth century or in the seventh, sometimes as late as c. AD 700. But apart from the archaeological *terminus*, specific attributions to one subsequent period or another lack solid

³² G. Brett, 'Byzantine Water-Mill', *Antiquity* 13, 1939, 354–6, pl. VII.

³³ Brett, *First Report* (cit. n. 31), 64–5; Talbot Rice, *Second Report* (cit. n. 31), 149. The tesserae range between 2 and 6 mm, and are especially fine in the faces; densities of over 400 per dm sq are recorded.



247 Constantinople, Great Palace, mosaics from peristyle, detail of boy with geese.



248 Constantinople, Great Palace, mosaics from peristyle, detail of man feeding mule.

ground, since there is so little that is really comparable. Parallels have tended to be drawn with works in quite different media (such as silver plates whose datestamps allow them to be placed securely), and in different regions of the Mediterranean, or else with a general *Zeitstil*, which is also often very vaguely defined.³⁴

Two recent studies have examined the question more closely, and come to opposite conclusions. Hellenkemper Salies has questioned the validity of the archaeological basis for the generally accepted *terminus*.³⁵ She shows how inadequate are the published records of the excavations for any arguments based on stratigraphy, and how precarious are all the other elements that have been quoted in

this context; she argues that any date from the mid-fifth century onwards is compatible with the archaeological evidence. She also claims, correctly, that stylistic parallels with works in other media have no validity for dating purposes, and that the only proper line of approach is to try to relate the work to others of its own kind, in the same medium and belonging to a consistent tradition: it must therefore be considered in the context of the development of floor mosaics. No mosaics, of any date, comparable to the Great Palace mosaic are to be found in Asia Minor or Greece, so there was clearly no tradition in this region with which it may be associated. In Syria, on the other hand, 'figure-carpet' of similar composition with isolated figures spread out over a white ground are well established in the second half of the fifth century. One in particular, the hunting pavement from the 'Triclinos Building' at Apamea, has often been compared with the Great Palace mosaic. Its date also is problematic, partly because it too has a very 'classical' character, but it appears to have a *terminus ante quem* of AD 539.³⁶ She claims further that figure-carpet of this sort disappear after the fifth century, and that mosaics of the sixth and seventh centuries in Syria are entirely different. On this basis, therefore, she argues that the mosaic is to be associated with the Syrian developments in the second half of the fifth century, and seen as the product of a prestigious Syrian workshop brought to Constantinople for the project, in the absence of established mosaic workshops in the capital. She further argues that the three-dimensional figure-style shows it must be placed early in the group of Syrian figure-carpet, probably in the second third of the fifth century.

On the other hand Trilling, in a detailed discussion of the style of the mosaics, has argued for a much later date.³⁷ He too considers the Syrian figure-carpet, but treats them only as antecedents, and takes the mosaic from the baptistery at Mount Nebo in Jordan, dated by inscription to AD 531, as a *terminus post quem*. He then argues that the treatment of pictorial space in the individual figures and groups, and their relationship to the white ground, are characteristic of the first half of the seventh century, specifically the reign of Heraclius (AD 610–41). These latter arguments, however, are based not on floor

³⁴ Above, ch.10, n.48; placed by Balty not before the mid-fifth century.

³⁵ Trilling, *DOP* 43, 1989, esp.36–54. He accepts AD 539 as the actual date for the laying of the Apamea mosaic (not for a subsequent repair), to make it conform to his view of the development of style, especially the treatment of pictorial space, in this period.

mosaics (nothing comparable exists from the date he proposes), but on a small number of works in other media, notably the silver plates, and on wall and vault mosaics such as those of S. Agnese in Rome. The attempt to characterise a general style of the period on so slight a basis, and to fit into it works in quite different media, is not convincing. Hellenkemper Salies is undoubtedly right in insisting that the work be studied in the context of the development of floor mosaics in the eastern Mediterranean, and that within this only the Syrian figure-carpet are comparable. Equally clearly, however, none of them offer exact parallels, and the exceptional quality of the Great Palace mosaic weakens close comparisons with works which are often provincial in style and execution. The naturalistic quality of the figure style is no reliable indicator of an early date within the series of figure-carpet, since it depends rather upon the skill of the workshop. Figure-carpet did not in fact disappear in Syria at the end of the fifth century; examples continued to be produced in the sixth century and even later, as they did in the more southerly regions of Arabia (Jordan).³⁸ In Constantinople the mosaic remains an *unicum*, and attempts to compare it to works in other media, or to a general *Zeitstil*, have no validity.

Fortunately it now appears that new study of the archaeological evidence will help to resolve the question. Excavations were carried out beneath the level of the pavement in the late 1980s, as part of a Turkish–Austrian project of restoration of the mosaics. The results have not yet been published in detail, but preliminary publication reports the presence under the foundations of a layer of fill, containing amphora sherds and other material dating predominantly from the second half of the fifth century. The last quarter of the fifth century is proposed as a *terminus post quem* for the laying of the foundations. This does not suffice to make clear how long a gap might be possible between this *terminus* and the mosaic itself, though it seems sufficient to rule out any of the substantially later dates that have been proposed. The first part of the sixth century may be taken provisionally as the most likely date.³⁹

³⁸ Cf. J. Balty, 'La mosaïque en Syrie', in J.-M. Dentzer, W. Orthmann eds., *Archéologie et histoire de la Syrie II* (1989), 514–16; Donceel-Voute 460–2.

³⁹ See W. Jobst, H. Vetter, eds., *Mosaikenforschung im Kaiserpalast von Konstantinopel* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften 228, Vienna 1992), esp.28–60.

⁴⁰ See Trilling, *DOP* 43, 1989, 54–69. Trilling's own interpretation starts

Equally problematic is the search for a meaning for the mosaic. No coherent theme appears to link the various scenes, and attempts that have been made to find an underlying symbolism have all had to force the evidence.⁴⁰ The two main sources of material are those of bucolic idyll and of wild nature, where man's role is that of hunter; together these create the predominant atmosphere of the mosaic, part peaceful, part violent. The aim of the designer is surely to create, for the rulers of the empire as they passed along the portico, a splendid series of images of the world over which they ruled. That world is characterised principally by the bounties of peaceful nature on the one hand, and on the other by its violence and ferocity: man must fight to preserve order and tranquillity. It is likely that the mosaicists, faced with an area to decorate of unprecedented size, drew very liberally upon the stock of motifs within their repertory, adapting and inventing where necessary, and including some that might not immediately seem to fit the context; it was hardly intended that the individual images should be subjected to detailed scrutiny. The Great Palace mosaic should be taken as an outstanding example of the ability of early Byzantine craftsmen to present a vision of the secular world. In some respects it still draws on the nearly millennial tradition of classical art, and many motifs can be traced back in the mosaic repertory for centuries. But the impression of the whole is very unclassical: elegant, vigorous figures are combined like exquisite details in an abstract, almost disembodied overall view, whose rhythms are repeated endlessly along the long porticoes.

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convincingly by stressing 'the interplay of idyllic life, violence, and protection' (58–9). But his further search for a specific political message linked to the policies of Heraclius lacks foundation, and in particular his attempt to associate the mosaic with Vergil's *Georgics* is quite unconvincing, as is his belief that it also represents an internal struggle within the soul of the emperor himself.

Wall and vault mosaics

I

The use of mosaic to decorate walls and vaults has separate origins from those of floor mosaics. Though the two media influenced one another extensively in the course of their development, they remained distinct, each with its own methods, aims, and repertory, and to some extent its own materials. The distinction was recognised in the Latin terminology, which differentiated between the *musiarius*/ *musivarius*, who evidently made wall and vault mosaics, and the *tessellarius* who made pavements.¹ Comparison of the two media is inevitably hampered by the circumstances of preservation. Many thousands of floor mosaics have survived in excellent condition all over the Roman Empire, but wall and vault mosaics, more fragile by their nature and clinging to a vertical or concave surface, have been preserved only under exceptional conditions. Indeed, until recently it was not uncommon to read that such mosaics were an invention of the time of Constantine first used on a large scale in Christian buildings, since these buildings, which have been continuously in use, repaired and restored, have preserved the most extensive surviving examples of mosaic decoration of walls and vaults. In fact numerous Roman buildings show traces of mosaic on wall and vault, in the form of fragments, loose tesserae, or imprints on the mortar; it is clear that the use of such mosaic was very widespread, at least in the later centuries of the Empire. Recent work, especially the studies of Sear and Lavagne, have done much to clarify the history of the art and to illustrate and explain its development.

There are no antecedents in the Greek world for the use of mosaic on upright surfaces; it is essentially a Roman invention. Literary sources attest to the practice in Ptolemaic Egypt of encrusting objects with precious and semi-precious stones; these may have provided the models imitated in cheaper materials by the Romans.²

¹ Cf. Sear 16–19; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 405–11; and below, ch. 16, n. 39. The distinction prevails in Latin, though it is probably not as exclusive as Sear claims, whereas in Greek terms such as *μουσικός* can be used more broadly of mosaics whatever their location.

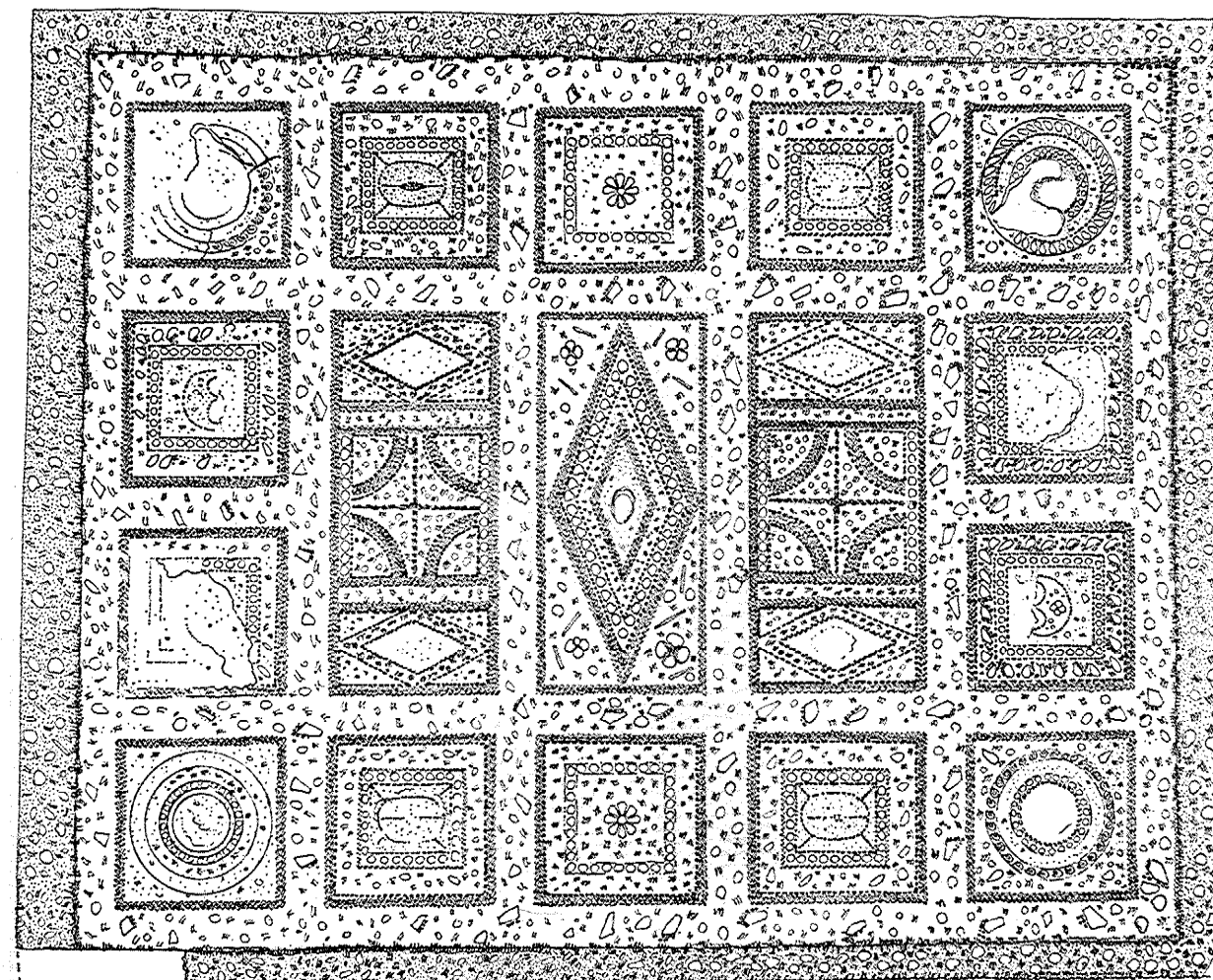
Archaeologically the origins of the art are to be seen in a fashion that was extremely popular among wealthy Romans of the late Republic and early Empire: the decoration of real and artificial grottoes. Caves and cave-like structures played an important role in the luxury villas of the first centuries BC and AD, where landscape architecture and the interrelation of the building with its natural setting were developed and exploited to the greatest effect. Caves had associations with the nymphs and the Muses, as well as other deities; hence the terms *musaeum* and *nymphaeum* used to refer to these grottoes.³ They frequently contained a source of water which also might be enhanced or imitated artificially; and they provided on a hot Mediterranean afternoon a welcome shady place for relaxation, a discussion among friends, or a banquet. The opportunity they offered for the intermingling of nature and art appealed especially to the taste of the aristocratic landowners: a natural cave could be embellished with all the resources of art, an artificial one given the appearance of natural rusticity, and every possible combination explored in between.

Our earliest examples of artificially embellished grottoes appear around the middle of the first century BC. The materials used for decoration show that at this stage there was virtually no connection with the mosaic used for pavements. Pumice, other volcanic rocks, and marine incrustations were used to line walls and vaults to give an artificial structure the appearance of a natural cave. Shells form borders, dividing the area to be decorated into panels or marking off one zone from another; less often they are used for a design. The most common are the cockle (*cardium edule*) and the whelk (*murex brandaris*); larger shells are found occasionally. Chips of unshaped white marble fill panels or form backgrounds. Colour is provided by beads of Egyptian blue, an artificial pigment which can be shaped into pellets; in addition the mortar in which the elements are set may be painted.⁴ The best

² Cf. Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 120–4, 377–9, with refs.

³ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 266–302, with refs.

⁴ Sear 37–43; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 411–37.



249 Formiae, 'Villa of Cicero', *nymphaeum*, drawing of vault. c.70–50 BC.

example of such decoration is in the small *nymphaeum* of the so-called 'Villa of Cicero' at Formiae, inserted at sea level into the foundation terracing of the villa; the construction technique indicates a date around the second quarter of the first century BC.⁵ An outer room is encrusted with marine deposits, shells, and pumice, covering walls, vaults, and the surviving column, all designed to give a rough, rustic appearance. A barrel-vaulted recess containing the fountain has more sophisticated decoration (figures 249, 250). On the side walls is an illusionistic architectural scheme of a mock portico framing *aediculae*. The vault is divided into square and rectangular coffers, which contain motifs such as weapons and rosettes. The outlines of the design are marked out in

shells of a wide variety of types, with occasional touches of Egyptian blue, all applied with great precision and consistency. Spaces between are filled with unshaped marble chips and marine incrustations. The illusionistic architecture recalls Second Style painting, but the immediate influence is more likely to come from stuccoes; the coffered vault in particular has close parallels in late Republican stucco, whose imitation can be seen at the same period in the design of floor mosaics.⁶

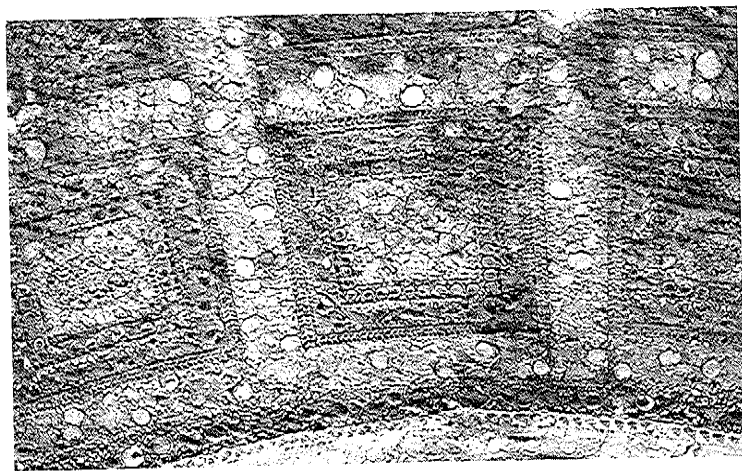
Similar elements are used in a richer composition in the vault of the cryptoporticus which forms part of the Republican buildings preceding Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.⁷ Although not itself a grotto, the semi-subterranean portico has much in common with grottoes, and the

⁵ C.F. Giuliani, M. Guaitoli, 'Il ninfeo minore della villa detta di Cicerone a Formia', *RömMitt* 79, 1972, 191–219, pls. 97–104, who propose a date between 70 and 50 BC; Sear 45–7 no. 4, pls. 1.4, 2.3, 3.1; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 386–92, who thinks the decoration indicates a date shortly after 50 BC. Cf. also M. Valenti, 'Il "ninfeo Ponari" di Cassino (Fr.): analisi stilistica e cronologica delle decorazioni', *ArchCl*

44, 1992, 51–80; M. Valenti, 'Il mosaico rustico a conchiglie ed il ninfeo Ponari di Cassino. Riflessioni su una moda decorativa di età tardo-repubblicana', *Atti II Colloquio AISCOR* (1995), 49–60.

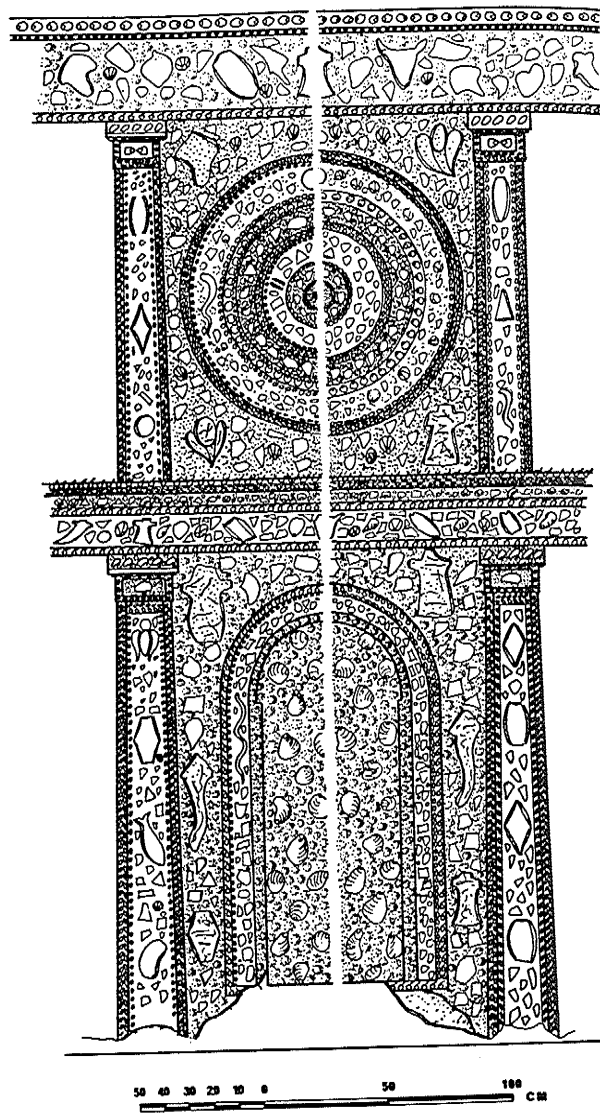
⁶ Above, ch. 4, n. 9.

⁷ H. Lavagne, 'Villa d'Hadrien. La mosaïque de voûte du cryptoportique républicain et les débuts de l'opus musivum en Italie', *MEFRA*

250 Formiae, 'Villa of Cicero', *nymphaeum*, detail of vault.

presence of a rock-cut fountain at the end of one wing made the connection closer. The mosaic occupies only one section of the vault of one wing of the cryptoporticus; the reason why no more was executed is unknown. Within this section the entire vault is covered with a series of concentric borders around a central medallion. The motifs include small birds and a broad leafy garland, as well as fine lacy designs of tendrils and palmettes. The main material used is white marble chips, set into mortar painted in different colours, with beads of Egyptian blue picking out the most important elements of the design; shells form some of the borders, but are used much more sparingly here. The effect again seems modelled upon contemporary vault decorations of stucco, which were likewise normally white, with slight touches of colour.

New materials were gradually added to those in use in this earliest phase. Glass was becoming much more common in Italy at the end of the first century BC, and began to be used in the decoration of *nymphaea*, at first in the form of re-used waste: broken fragments, disks, or pieces specially cast to shape. This stage is exemplified by several grottoes from the later years of the century; for instance one from the Via degli Annibaldi in Rome, whose construction suggests a date c.30–20 BC⁸ (figures 251, 252). Glass is also found in the form of twisted rods of several colours, which are used to frame panels or zones. But the decisive step came with the appearance of glass

251 Rome, Via degli Annibaldi, *nymphaeum*, elevation drawing. Probably c.30–20 BC.

tesserae. Tesserae of stone or marble and of Egyptian blue appear first, a regularisation of the materials already in use; glass tesserae, although used for figured subjects in floor mosaics from the Hellenistic period, are not found at all in the earlier grottoes.⁹ Their first archaeologically datable appearance is in the tomb called the

⁸ 'Nota sui giardini antichi del Palatino', *MEFRA* 104, 1992, 921, fig. 2, without further details of the technique.

⁹ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 371–80, has suggested that glass tesserae may have made an isolated earlier appearance, as part of the decoration of the scene building of the temporary theatre erected in Rome by M. Aemilius Scaurus for his games in 58 BC, a building notorious for its luxury. The suggestion depends on the interpretation of a disputed passage of Pliny (*H.N.* 36.114). Cf. also H. Lavagne, 'Luxuria inaudita: Marcus Aemilius Scaurus et la naissance de la mosaïque murale', in *Hommages Stern* 259–64.

footnote 7 (cont.)

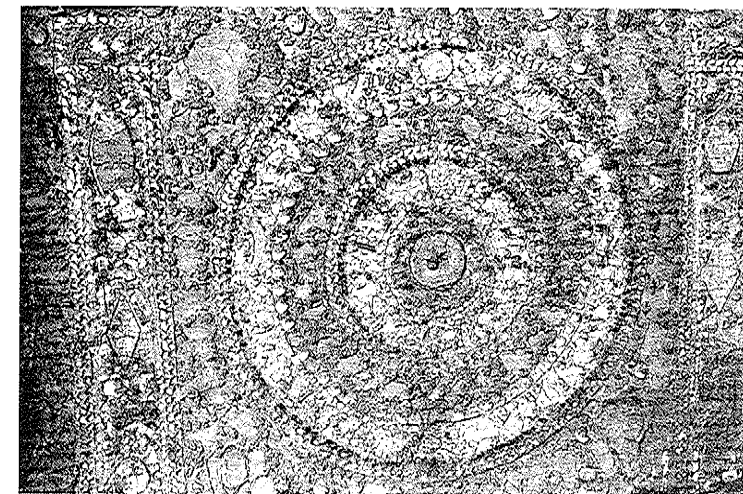
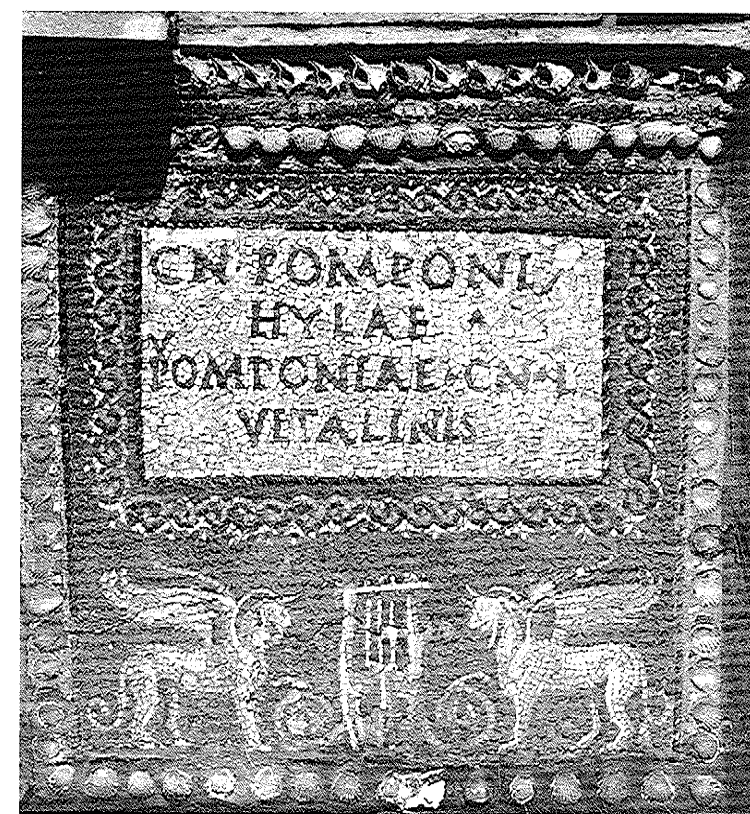
85, 1973, 197–245; Lavagne, 'Utilitas-decor. Le cryptoportique républicain de la Villa d'Hadrien', in: *Les Cryptoportiques dans l'Architecture Romaine* (CEFR 14, Rome 1973), 167–86; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 355–6, 392–4; Sear 48–50 no. 6, pl. 4.1–3. The mosaic is later than the original construction of the cryptoporticus; Lavagne dates it 40–30 BC.

⁸ F. Sear, 'The earliest wall mosaics in Italy', *BSR* 43, 1975, 88–92; Sear 54–6 no. 13, pls. 6.3, 7.1; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 401. A small *nymphaeum* decorated with shell mosaics formed part of the complex making up the House of Augustus on the Palatine: see M.A. Tomei,

Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas in Rome, whose masonry places it in the late Tiberian period.¹⁰ At the entrance to the tomb is a mosaic plaque bearing an inscription with the names of Pomponius and his wife; below are a pair of griffins confronted heraldically across a lyre, symbols of Apollo (figure 253). Shells, pumice, and twisted glass rods are all used; the background of the inscription is of white stone tesserae, that of the griffins in Egyptian blue. In addition tesserae of yellow, green, and light blue glass are used for the figured motif, and for a border of wave pattern around the inscription. These give a brightness of colouring which contrasts with the near monotone of the cryptoporticus of Hadrian's Villa; they also allow the mosaicist a new freedom in handling both figured and ornamental motifs.

The consequence was that a whole new repertory was opened up to the *musivarii*. They were freed from the constraints of imitating the rustic appearance of grottoes, and the use of wall and vault mosaic expanded into other buildings. These continued at first to bear some connection to a grotto: either a similarity of appearance, like a tomb, or an association with water, for instance the vaults and apses of a bath. Pliny, writing in the 60s to 70s AD, could describe the use of glass mosaic in vaults (evidently of baths) as a new invention in his own day, but a familiar one; Seneca and Statius also speak of glass mosaic as a fashionable decoration for the vaults of baths.¹¹ Pliny further speaks of vaults as the new home for *pavimenta*, a term which must here refer to floor mosaics, indicating the assimilation between the two arts. In the first century AD the use of polychrome figured decoration on floor mosaics had almost disappeared; and the task of imitating painting in permanent materials, so long a feature of Hellenistic floor mosaics, began to characterise those of walls and vaults.¹²

However throughout the first century AD the main function of wall and vault mosaic continued to be the decoration of grottoes and *nymphaea*. Some of these are imperial creations of great splendour and fantasy, such as the marine grotto at Sperlonga which almost certainly belonged to Tiberius. Although most famous for its sculptural decoration with scenes of the adventures of Ulysses, it was also extensively decorated with mosaics of pumice, shells, Egyptian blue, and glass tesserae. Only fragments survive, showing floral patterns, naturalistic and stylised, while the rock carved into the form of a ship's prow at the entrance to the cave bore a plaque of mosaic giving its name as *Navis*

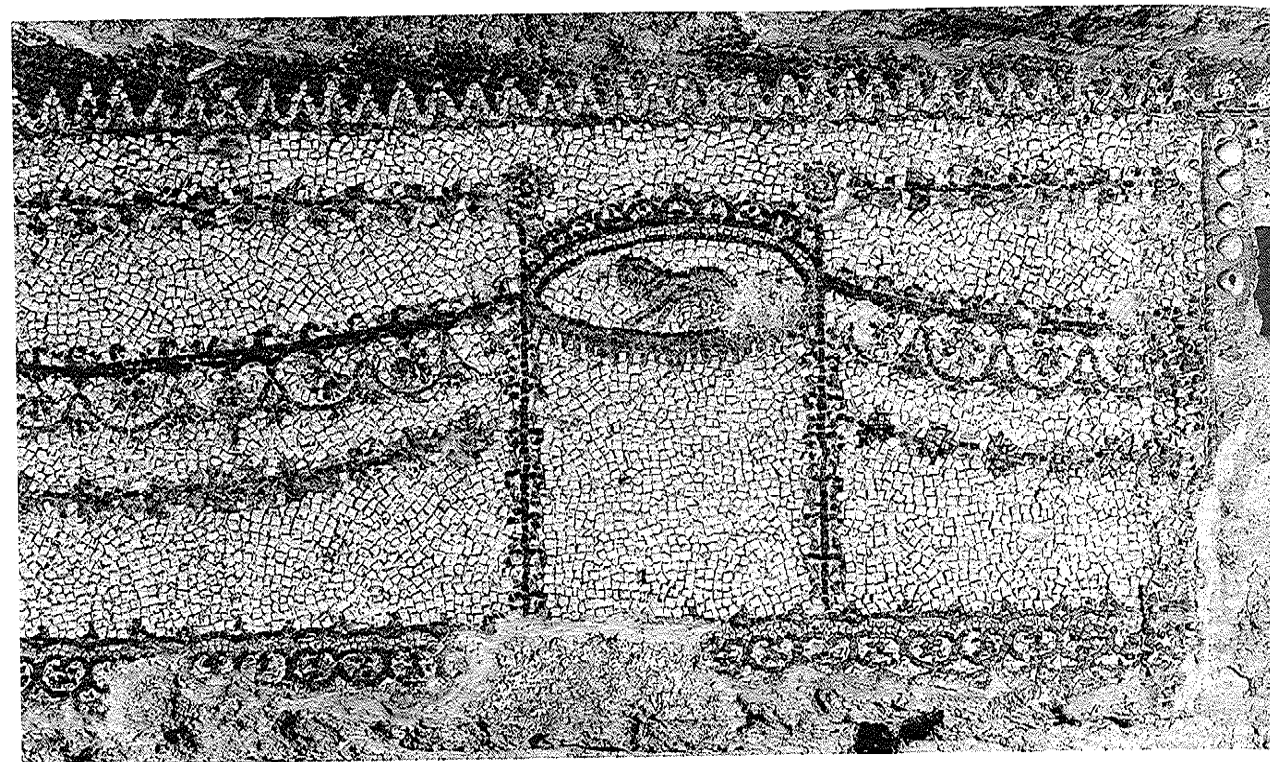
252 Rome, Via degli Annibaldi, *nymphaeum*, detail.

253 Rome, Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas, mosaic plaque. Second quarter of the first century AD.

¹⁰ T. Ashby, 'The Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas', *BSR* 5, 1910, 463–71; Sear 65–6 no. 25, pl. A; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 408–9.

¹¹ Plin. *H.N.* 36.189: *pulsa deinde ex humo pavimenta in camaras transire vitro*; Sen. *Ep.* 86.6, again of baths: *pauper sibi videtur ac sordidus ... nisi vitro absconditur camera*; Statius *Silv.* 1.5.42–3, on the Baths of Claudius Etruscus. See Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 373–4, 584–5.

¹² Above, ch. 4, section 1.



254 Rome, Palatine Hill, structures beneath the Horti Farnesiani, wall mosaic frieze. Height 0.65m. c. AD 25–64.

Argo, the ship Argo.¹³ Fragments of mosaic are also known from a real ship, the luxury galley of Gaius Caligula found in Lake Nemi, where they are thought to have decorated a small *nymphaeum*.¹⁴

Beneath the Horti Farnesiani on the Palatine Hill in Rome three small rooms have been found, which were destroyed by the construction of Nero's *Domus Aurea*; they may have belonged either to a luxurious private house or to Nero's first palace, the *Domus Transitoria*, and can be dated on stratigraphic and stylistic grounds between c. AD 25 and 64.¹⁵ One room (3) contains a frieze of wall mosaic on a white ground (figure 254). Delicate *aediculae* supported on candelabra or vegetal stalks are linked by garlands stretched between them; every second *aedicula* contains a small green panther. The vault and lunette were also covered with mosaic destroyed when the room was abandoned. Traces remain of the tesserae and

of colouring which have allowed the reconstruction of a design based upon similar garlands and candelabra. In another room (2), in addition to simpler friezes in the lunette, part of the vault is preserved. It shows nine concentric borders, of garlands, palmettes, and textile motifs, again on a white ground; the centre of the vault suggested a spread carpet. The tesserae are all of glass or of Egyptian blue, set loosely in plaster touched up in colour; limited use is made of bands of shells to outline major architectural features, and of rods of twisted glass. The lacy borders, the candelabra, the jewelled and textile motifs, are all closely related to those used in the Fourth Style of Pompeian painting; they have nothing in common with contemporary floor mosaics.

More ambitious designs are found at Lauro di Nola in Campania, in a villa with a *nymphaeum* which has been dated to the Tiberian period.¹⁶ A central fountain is

¹³ Sear 64–5 no.24, pls.10–12; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 515–58; R. Neudecker, *Die Skulpturenausstattung römischer Villen in Italien* (Mainz am Rhein 1988), 220–3 no. 62, with full refs. Despite the numerous controversies over the dating of the complex and its decoration, the attribution to Tiberius seems now generally accepted (refs. in Lavagne, *ibid.*); Neudecker, *ibid.*, suggests that the wall mosaic and the ship Argo may be Flavian.

¹⁴ G. Ucelli, *Le Navi di Nemi* (Rome 1950), 226–8, pls.D,E; Sear 72–3 no.33, pl.19.2–3.

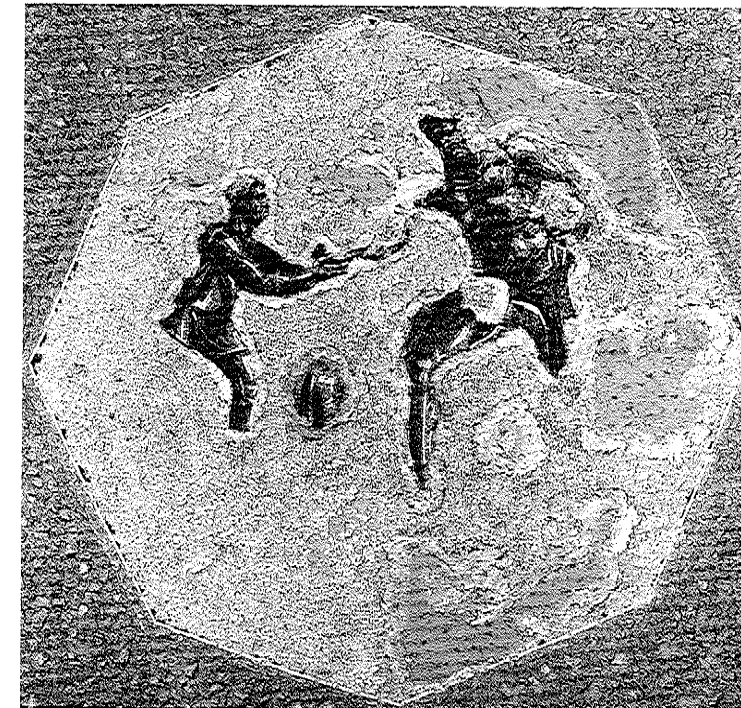
¹⁵ M. de Vos Raaijmakers, 'Tre ambienti con mosaico parietale sotto gli Orti Farnesiani sul Palatino', *CMGR* IV, 83–6, pls.xxxv–xxxviii; de

Vos Raaijmakers, *Dionysus, Hylas* ch.1. I am very grateful to Mariette de Vos for allowing me to see prepublication copies of the proofs of chapters 1 and 2 of *Dionysus, Hylas*, covering these rooms and the Quirinal *nymphaeum* discussed below, n.20.

¹⁶ W. Johannowsky, E. Laforgia, M. Romito, V. Sampaolo, *Le Ville romane dell'età imperiale* (Naples 1986), 94–6. See also the recently discovered *nymphaeum*, probably Claudian, at Massalubrense: V. Sampaolo, 'Il ninfeo a mosaico di Marina della Lobra (Massalubrense)', *Atti II Colloquio AISCOR* (1995), 61–70; T. Budetta, 'Il ninfeo a mosaico di Massalubrense: nuove scoperte', *Atti III Colloquio AISCOR* (1996), 695–704.

flanked by rows of arcaded niches, separated by engaged columns; the entire surface is faced with mosaic. Pumice, shell borders, twisted glass rods, and marine deposits are used to a certain extent; but the greater part is composed of tesserae, blue glass or Egyptian blue for the background, and several colours of stone for the designs. These consist mainly of birds, vases, and garlands, motifs familiar in garden paintings; there is also a hunting scene of stags and hounds. In places where the tesserae have fallen away, the mortar shows the preliminary design in colour as a guide for the mosaicist; this procedure was to become a standard practice in wall mosaic.¹⁷

At this stage, the use of figured motifs is still somewhat timid; the branch of painting whose influence is most apparent here is garden painting, which had its own associations with grottoes, as in the Garden Room of Livia's Villa at Prima Porta.¹⁸ But by the reign of Nero mosaic was freely rivalling wall painting even in its most ambitious compositions. Innovations and refinements of both architecture and decoration characterised the *Domus Aurea* itself, the Golden House of Nero, which brought the luxuries and fantasies of a country villa into the heart of the city of Rome. It duly contained a *nymphaeum*, complete with fountain, opening off a reception room which in turn looked out on the peristyle.¹⁹ The barrel vault of the *nymphaeum* was lined with stalactites of pumice, but the rest of the decoration abandoned any imitation of a natural grotto. A mosaic frieze, 2.20 m high, bordered with shells, ran around the walls of the entire room beneath the vault; the latter contained four medallions and a large central octagon of mosaic. Only the last survives in recognisable form; it contained the figures, over one metre high, of Ulysses offering wine to the Cyclops Polyphemus, a theme recalling the sculpture of Sperlonga and a favourite for grottoes (figure 255). The figures are rendered in tesserae predominantly of green and brownish glass, and also of gilded glass, with white highlights, perhaps imitating a bronze statue group. Both



255 Rome, *Domus Aurea*, *nymphaeum* (room 13), vault mosaic, central octagon with Ulysses and Cyclops. Sides of octagon 1 m. AD 64–68.

the use of a figured subject in this place and the sheer size of the figures (designed to be seen from ten metres below) represent a new departure for mosaic.

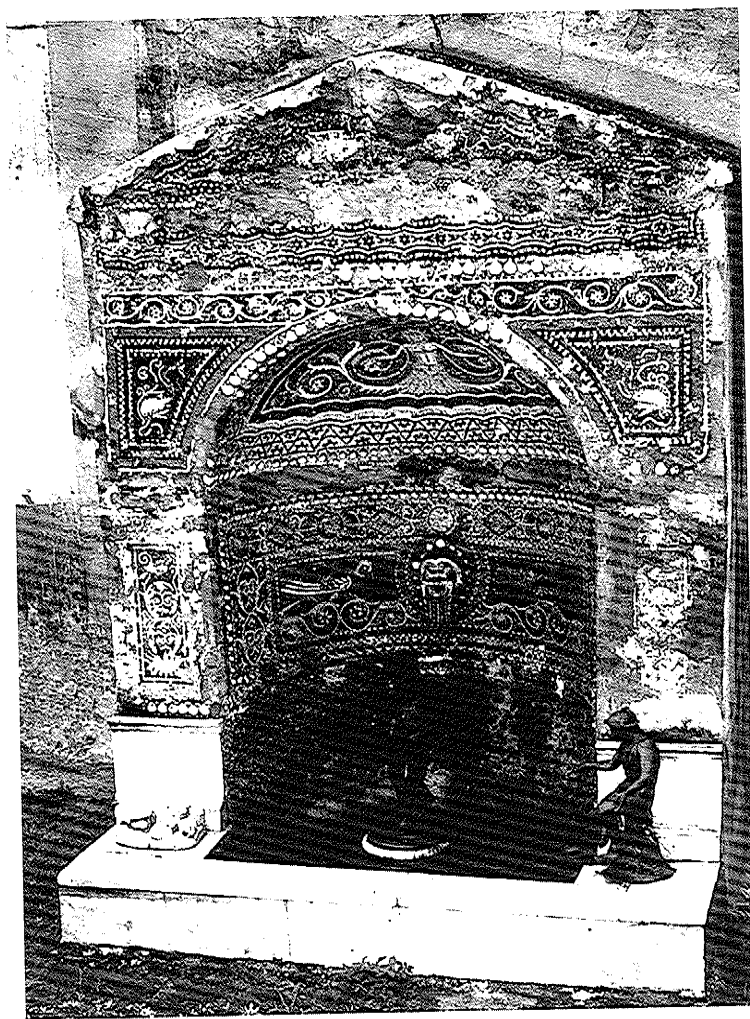
The scanty traces of mosaic that survive in the Golden House do not permit reconstruction of the overall decorative design. Another building in Rome offers a clearer picture of the advances in the use of the medium. On the Quirinal hill are the remains of a *nymphaeum* or similar structure with wall mosaics of astonishing extent and quality.²⁰ At a higher level is an apsidal wall with decoration of plants and birds, still belonging to the realm of garden painting. On the lower level the outer wall of a cryptoporticus, originally perhaps nearly five metres high, was completely covered with mosaic of glass, marble and stone tesserae: shells appear only in very limited use as borders. Three superimposed storeys of fantasy architecture, mainly in gold and red against a dark blue

¹⁷ Cf. below, ch.17, n.21. Preliminary designs are also visible in the rooms below the Horti Farnesiani (above, n.15), in the Polyphemus mosaic of the *Domus Aurea* (below, n.19), and in the buildings on the Quirinal Hill (below, n.20).

¹⁸ M. Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta* (New York 1955); C. Calci, G. Messineo, *La Villa di Livia a Prima Porta* (Rome 1984), 24–30. Cf. also the fragments of mosaic from a *nymphaeum* on the Via Gregoriana, Rome, with architectural motifs and elements of sacred landscape: K. Parlasca, 'Wandmosaik eines Nymphäums unter der Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rom', *RömMitt* 95, 1988, 159–86, pls.62–9, suggesting a date c. AD 41–7.

¹⁹ H. Lavagne, 'Le nymphée au Polyphème de la *Domus Aurea*', *MEFR* 82, 1970, 673–721; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 579–88; Sear 90–2 no.61, pls.35–6.

²⁰ De Vos, *Dionysus, Hylas* ch.2; de Vos, 'Late Republican and Flavian mosaics in the Horti Sallustiani (Rome)', *CMGR* VI, 91–6. A late Republican wall mosaic with a scroll belonged to an earlier decoration of the same building. Short description, and excellent coloured illustrations, in F. Coarelli, *Roma sepolta* (Rome 1984), 147–55.



256 Pompeii vi 8,23, House of the Small Fountain, *aedicula*-fountain. Height 2.31 m. Probably AD 62–79.

ground, evoke the *scaenae frons* of the Roman theatre; various figures, human and animal, appear in panels or scattered through the architecture. In the central *aedicula* a big panel contains nearly life-size figures of Hylas and the Nymphs, framed in the entrance to a grotto. The scenographic architectural designs recall the most extravagant effects of the Fourth Style of Pompeian wall painting, combining real, if exaggeratedly thin, columns, receding entablatures, coffered ceilings seen in perspective, and fantastic details such as the vegetal candelabra supporting

a circular pavilion, and ornamental filigree borders. The figures are naturalistically modelled, and probably imitate paintings. The whole gives a spectacular glimpse of the splendour of decoration of aristocratic dwellings in the capital around the reign of Nero or the early Flavian period.²¹

Lower down the social scale the medium was adopted enthusiastically by the residents of the Campanian towns. About twenty *nymphaea* and fountains ornamented with mosaic have been found at Pompeii; the majority date from the last years of the city, though some may be earlier.²² It was evidently the height of fashion to have a mosaic fountain as an ornament of garden or courtyard, and neighbouring houses rival one another in their installation (figure 256; plate 36). They are found even in houses of quite modest size; several are placed on the same axis as the main door of the house, so that they could be clearly seen by those entering. The most common form is an *aedicula*, sometimes over three metres high, with a niche crowned by a pediment; sometimes there are engaged columns at the sides, more often the façade is left flat to show off the decoration. Water runs into a basin in front, and often sculpture is added. More lavish forms of *nymphaeum* are also found occasionally, with walls articulated with niches. On most of these fountains the link with the decoration of grottoes has become very remote. Pumice is still used, though in the *aedicula*-fountains it is mostly confined to encircling the base of the niche, as a distant allusion to a rustic origin; shells form borders and outline the architectural features. But most of the surface is encrusted with mosaic, with tesserae of Egyptian blue, of stone and marble, and of glass in many brilliant shades. The nearby city of Puteoli (Pozzuoli) was one of the main centres in Italy in the first century AD for the manufacture both of Egyptian blue and of glass; the popularity of decoration with these materials in the Campanian towns is doubtless partly to be explained by their easy availability.²³

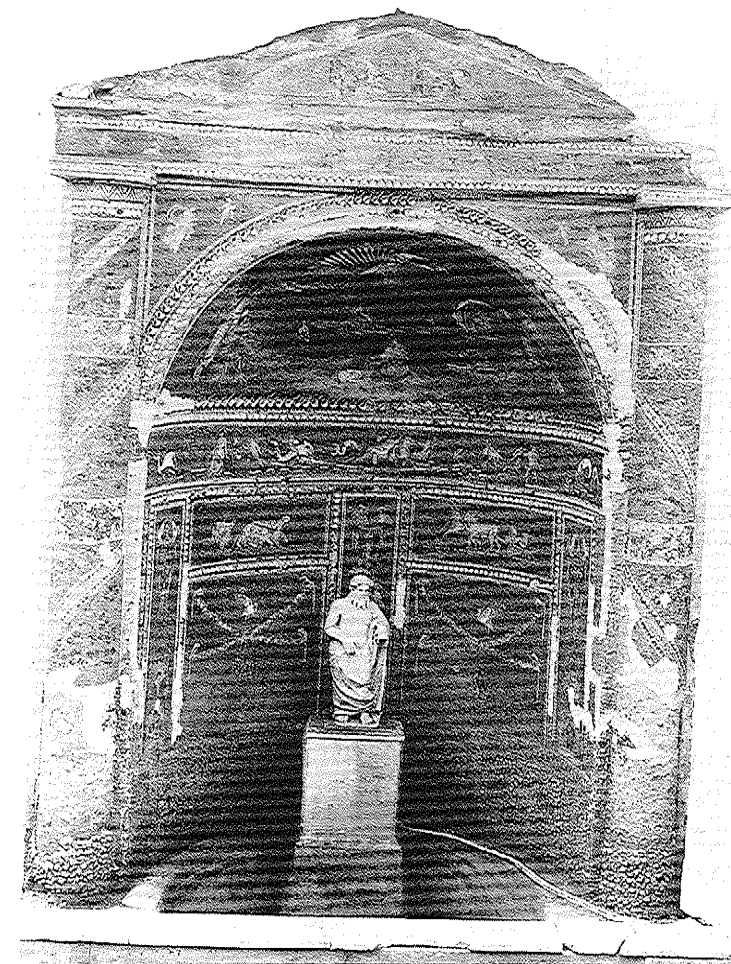
The ornamental repertory used on the fountains shows

middle of the first century for several of the examples, but does not discuss the archaeological evidence. E. La Rocca, M. and A. de Vos, *Guida archeologica di Pompei* (Verona 1976), 57, place half the mosaic fountain-niches (those with less elaborate decoration) before the earthquake of 62.

²³ Cf. M. Frederiksen, *Campania* (London 1984), 329; Frederiksen, s.v. Puteoli, *RE* 23.2 (1959), 2047–8; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 430–6 on Egyptian blue, the use of which persists longer in Campania than in Rome.

very close links with that of contemporary wall painting. Many border motifs are transferred directly between the two media; and the little figures of swans, dolphins, Erotes, who float against a plain ground in spaces such as the spandrels above the niche recall similar figures in Third and Fourth Style painting.²⁴ The Columned Fountain (ix 7,?) fills the whole semi-dome of its niche with a scene of the birth of Venus, carried in her shell among Tritons, Erotes, and Nereids against a ground of Egyptian blue broken by the lines of the waves in light blue, dark blue, and white. Beneath runs a frieze with marine figures, again on a blue ground (figures 257, 258). All are executed with the finest detail, the figures modelled with subtle nuances of fleshtones and drapery, highlights and shadows carefully rendered; the effect rivals naturalistic painting.²⁵ More often the fountains exploit the potential of the medium by accumulating bands of brightly coloured ornament, limiting the figured decoration to a minor role. In the House of the Small Fountain (vi 8,23), for instance, the semi-dome is filled with a half-human, half-vegetal figure, from whose skirts issue symmetrical scrolls (figure 256); in the House of the Scientists (vi 14,43) there is simply a brilliantly coloured shell.²⁶ Both designs came probably from stucco, and were destined to have a long history in the mosaic decoration of apses.

Garden painting is the inspiration in the magnificent fountain-*nymphaeum* in the House of the Wedding of Alexander at Pompeii (vi 17(Ins.Occ.),42)²⁷ (plate 37). The mosaic decorated an apse at the back of the summer *triclinium*; water ran down a cascade in its centre and flowed into a basin between the couches of the *triclinium*. A shell-pattern, more three-dimensionally rendered than in most of the other fountains, filled the semi-dome. On either side of the cascade were panels with garden scenes, plants and trees against a blue ground with marble fountain basins in their centre; doves perch on the rim, distantly recalling the Doves of Sosos. The remains of painted gardens can be made out on the surrounding walls of the main part of the room, while



257 Pompeii ix 7,?, Columned Fountain. Height 3.80 m. Probably mid-first century AD.

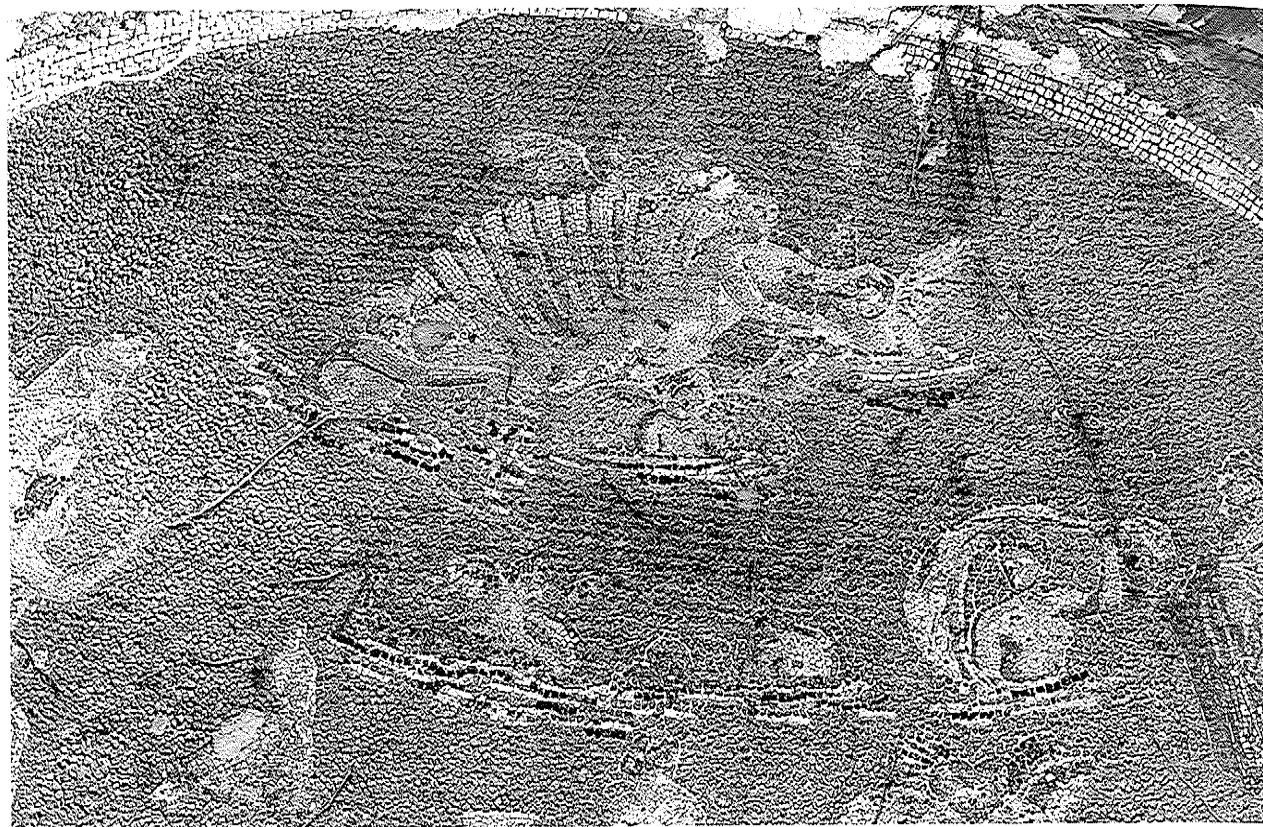
superb garden paintings decorated an adjacent room in the house.

Mosaic also began to be applied more widely in the Campanian cities to other surfaces, though it still usually retained some association with water or with the decoration of gardens. Columns might be completely encrusted with mosaic, as in the Villa of the Mosaic Columns at Pompeii, where they supported a pergola in front of the *nymphaeum*; they are covered with bands of imbrications, of floral ornament, and of small decorative figures.²⁸ In the House of the Stags at Herculaneum (iv.21), the pediment of a doorway opening onto the garden is faced with

della fontana piccola (vi 8, 23–4) (*Häuser in Pompeji* 8, Munich 1996).

²⁷ *Rediscovering Pompeii* (Rome 1990), 274–9 no.194, proposing a date in the second quarter of the first century AD for the whole complex; Jashemski, *Gardens* II, 166–7 no.313, 348–58 nos.60–1 (the garden paintings), 393 no.146 (the mosaic); she dates the *triclinium* to the last years of the city. A full publication is promised.

²⁸ Scar 82–3 nos.48–9, pls.28.2–31.1; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 632; V. Kockel, B.F. Weber, 'Die Villa delle Colonne a Mosaico in Pompeii', *RömMitt* 90, 1983, 65, 81; Jashemski, *Gardens* II, 277–8 no.568.



258 Pompeii ix 7?, Columned Fountain, detail.

mosaic.²⁹ The most extensive decoration surviving is that in the courtyard of the House of Neptune and Amphitrite at Herculaneum (v.6).³⁰ On one side is a *nymphaeum*, its niches lined with pumice, shells, and Egyptian blue (figure 259). The façade is covered with mosaic of stone and glass tesserae. Vine scrolls grow from *kantharoi* on the vertical panels between the niches. The larger panels above, on either side of the central niche, have hunting scenes; hounds pursue deer in a landscape, with green ground and a dark blue background. Heavy garlands hang above, and ornamental borders of scrolls and griffins surround the panels. In the middle of the adjacent wall is a big panel of mosaic with a border of pumice and shells. Neptune and Amphitrite stand in the centre, in a framework which combines architectural and ornamental motifs: columns at the sides support a frieze of imbrication pattern, a shell pattern rests on formal scrolls. The figures are naturalistically modelled and shaded, using tesserae of natural stone, whereas the framework is of brightly coloured glass, its effect ornamental and two-dimensional. The rest of the wall, on either side of the

²⁹ A. Maiuri, *Ercolano. I nuovi scavi* (1927–1958) 1 (Rome 1958), 312, figs.246, 257; Sear 27, 96 no.72, pl.41.1; Tran Tam Tinh, *La Casa dei Cervi à Herculaneum* (Rome 1988), 78–83, figs.147–9.

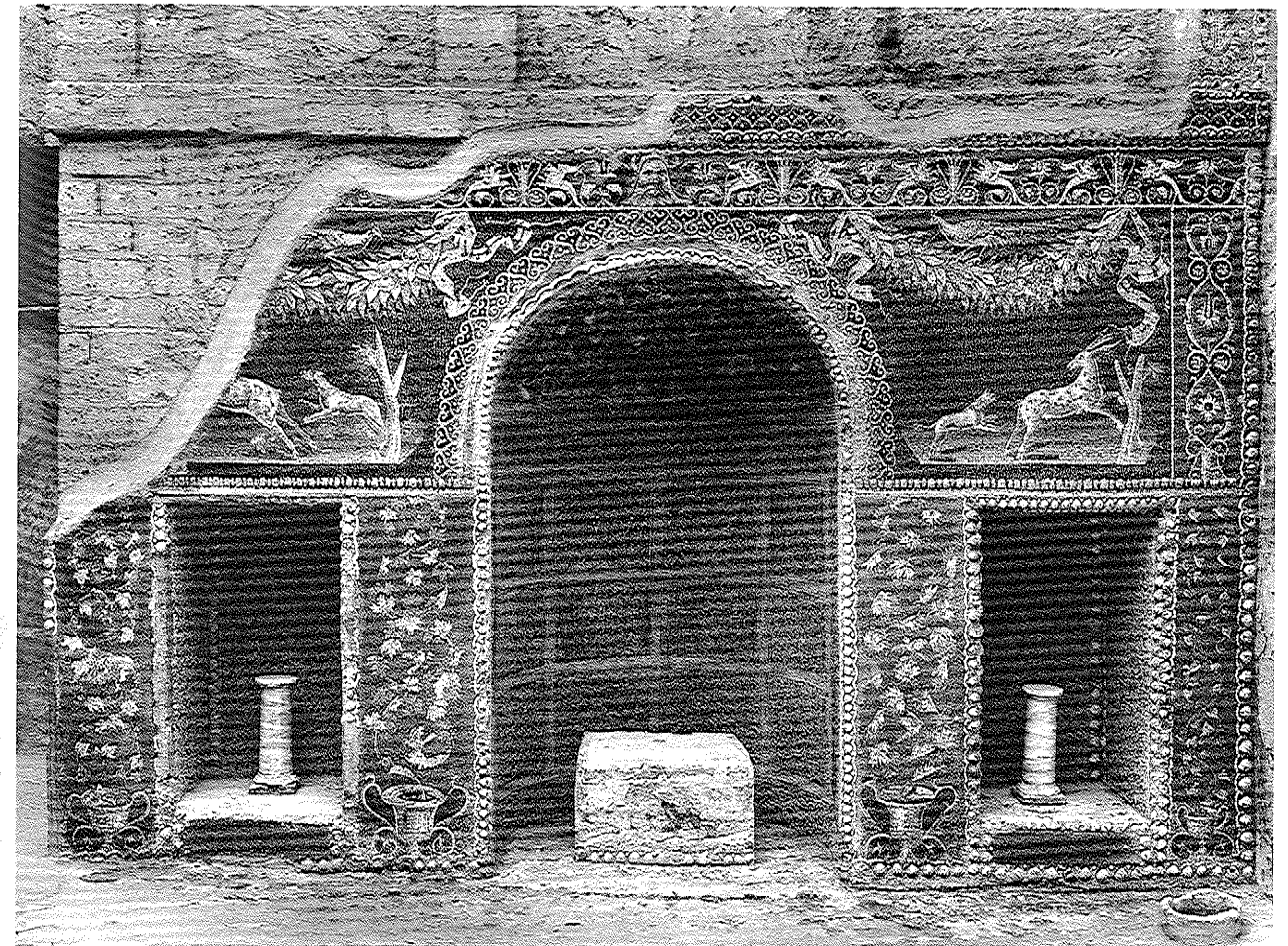
³⁰ Maiuri, *ibid.*, 397–401, figs.333–7; Sear 95–6 no.71, pl.40; Lavagne,

mosaic panel, is painted with garden views, replacing the real garden for which there is here no place; in the centre of the courtyard are the couches of an open-air *triclinium*.

By the third quarter of the first century AD, therefore, the *musivarii* had taken over the role of imitating painting which earlier was characteristic of the finer category of floor mosaics. Unlike floor mosaics, however, they adopted the overall compositional schemes of wall painting, and not just the pictorial treatment of figured scenes. Individual 'pictures' in wall mosaic do indeed exist. For example, the *nymphaeum* in the House of Apollo at Pompeii (VI 7.23) contained a mosaic panel set into a surround of pumice, and showing Achilles on Skyros; it is clearly related to the numerous paintings of the same subject³¹ (figure 260). But such 'pictures' usually play a small part, in comparison to the extensive surfaces covered with ornamental patterns, architectural motifs, and isolated figures or groups, in which the decorative potential of the medium is fully exploited. The technique is a little less fine than that of *vermiculatum*, with tesserae seldom smaller than 0.5 cm., and the

Operosa Antra 633–4; Jashemski, *Gardens* II, 268 no.550.

³¹ Sear 68–70 no.29, pl.17.1; Jashemski, *Gardens* II, 132 no. 247, figs.139–41, also citing two similar panels from the same house, now in Naples, with the wrath of Achilles and the Three Graces.

259 Herculaneum v.6, House of Neptune and Amphitrite, courtyard with *nymphaeum*. Probably third quarter of the first century AD.

colouring does not show the same range of nuances: the aim is for brilliance, rather than subtlety. Unlike a floor mosaic there is no need for the surface to be smooth, and the tesserae are deliberately set at an angle to one another to catch and reflect the light. The shells and pumice which are still used produce a contrast of textures; and the glittering richness was enhanced by the water of the fountains, by sculpture, and in most cases also by surrounding vegetation, echoed by garden paintings on the walls.

II

After AD 79 our evidence is again reduced to chance finds, fragments, and traces of destroyed decoration. It is clear that the use of the medium spread to a much wider geographical area. Italy continues to provide the largest number of examples, but the fashion was adopted in other parts of the western empire at least by the second century AD, and numerous, though mostly very fragmen-

tary traces have been found in Gaul and in the North African provinces. There is much less evidence from the east, but here too the technique was established by the second century; the remains of what must have been an impressive decoration with over life-size figures survive on a vault in the Gymnasium Baths at Samos.³² However our evidence is too scanty to permit different regional traditions to be distinguished.

Typologically too there was an expansion in the use of wall and vault mosaic. Fountains and *nymphaea* continued to be decorated with mosaic, but its most frequent use now was probably in baths. Tombs provided another common location; and it was adopted in some religious buildings, the most important being the shrines of Mithras which were intended to resemble caves and hence prolonged the tradition of the grotto, otherwise almost

³² W. Martini, *Das Gymnasium von Samos* (Samos xvi, Bonn 1984), 200–2, col.pls.1–3, pl.28; silver- and gold-glass tesserae have been identified among the fragments. The phase to which the mosaic apparently belongs is placed by Martini in the mid-second century: *ibid.* 235, 271.



260 Pompeii vi 7,23, House of Apollo, *nymphaeum*, wall panel with Achilles on Skyros. 1.13 m × 1.03 m. Probably mid-first century AD.

extinct.³³ There is some evidence for the use of wall and vault mosaic in the decoration of buildings such as theatres and circuses. By the beginning of the fourth century mosaic was in use on the vaults and domes of halls in the imperial palaces, as traces in the vestibule of Diocletian's palace at Split and in Constantine's Basilica at Trier attest.³⁴ Its widespread adoption in Christian churches is to be seen against this background. How extensive were the surfaces to which it was applied can sometimes be ascertained from the traces. In the Serapeum at Hadrian's Villa mosaic covered the whole surface of the semi-dome, the soffits of the niches beneath, the barrel-vaulted passages flanking it at the sides and the long barrel-vault at the back, and some smaller adjacent rooms. In the Baths of Caracalla it appears that the vaults, apses and lunettes of the rooms flanking the swimming pool, and probably those of the *frigidarium* too, were similarly treated.³⁵

The stylistic evolution of wall and vault mosaic between the late first and the fourth century AD is almost impossible to follow. There are signs that the two tech-

niques of floor and of wall mosaic began to exercise a greater degree of reciprocal influence. Floor mosaic was sometimes extended to cover adjacent vertical surfaces without any change in technique; thus the podia of Mithraea at Ostia are often faced with mosaic, decorated with black-and-white designs similar to those on the floors.³⁶ In North Africa there is a fashion for low fountain basins with curving walls less than a metre in height; tops, walls, and floor of the basin are covered with mosaic, sometimes in distinct zones, sometimes forming a continuous design overall. These usually make a greater use of glass than is normal in mosaics designed to be walked on, and the technique of the figures may be slightly finer; but the designs are closely related to those of contemporary floor mosaics. Two fountains of this type in Caesarea (Cherchel) in Mauretania Caesariensis may serve as examples. They have rich garlands along the top, and on the sides scenes of the Triumph of Neptune and of Ulysses and the Sirens, surrounded by broken lines indicating the sea; the ground is white³⁷ (figure 261). The craftsmen who executed these, and similar mosaics on the sides of plunge-baths and swimming pools, can safely be assumed to have been the same as those who laid the mosaics of the floors.

Another sign of the *rapprochement* between the two media may be seen in the use of *emblemata* as decoration for walls. These were prepared in their own setting-tray in the way usual for *emblemata*; the completed panel was then inserted into a wall, usually on an exterior façade. One still *in situ* on one of the tombs of the Vatican necropolis beneath St Peter's shows the death of Pentheus; it is set straight into the brick wall.³⁸ Such panels, whose main period of use appears to be the second and third centuries, belong to the tradition of floor *emblemata* and were undoubtedly manufactured in the same workshops; but they perpetuate the concept of the separate mosaic 'picture' on the wall.³⁹

Some larger wall and vault mosaics also illustrate this concept, but in a form more indebted to painting. Two

³³ *AntAfr* 15, 1980, 285–302; Sear 145 no.172, pl.62.2. Stern suggests a date in the first half of the fourth century, on the grounds of style; but fountains of this type are found from the second century onwards.

³⁴ J. Toynbee, J. Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations* (London 1956), 71–2, pl.19; H.P. L'Orange, 'The Adventus Ceremony and the Slaying of Pentheus as represented in two mosaics of about A.D.300', in *Likeness and Icon. Selected Studies in Classical and Early Mediaeval Art* (Odense 1973), 178–83.

³⁵ See M. Donderer, 'Ein verschollenes römisches Mosaik und die Gattung der Wandemblemata', *Hommages Stern* 123–8.

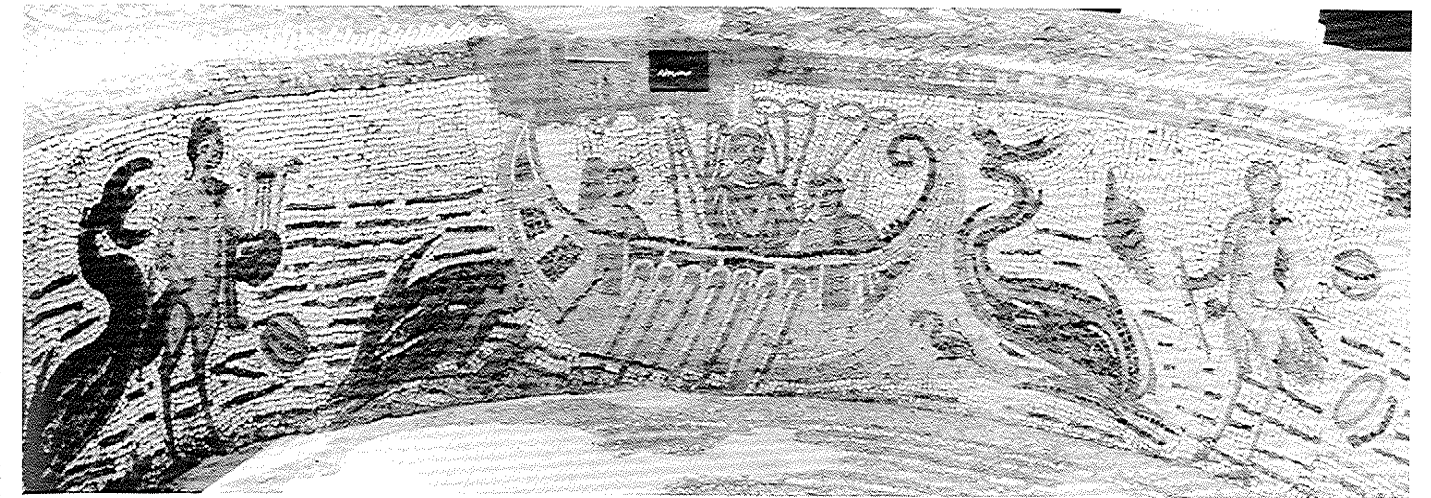
³⁶ Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 678–89, with refs., who points out that such cave-like Mithraea are especially characteristic of Italy; Sear 116–19 nos.112–18, 121 no.125.

³⁷ Split: Sear 179 no.284, with refs. Trier: Sear 172 no.257; Parlasca 67–8.

³⁸ Sear 28–9, 111–12 no.104; 126–7 no.134; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 603–6.

³⁹ E.g. Ostia 11.8.6, Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres: G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia* 2, I Mitrei (Rome 1954), 47–51, above, ch.4, n.28; 14.5.13, Mithraeum of the Seven Gates: *ibid.*, 93–9, pls.xix–xxi; Sear 116–19 nos.112, 117.

⁴⁰ H. Stern, 'Fontaine de Neptune au Musée de Cherchel (Algérie)',



261 Caesarea (Cherchel), fountain basin with Ulysses and the Sirens. Cherchel Museum. Third to fourth century AD.

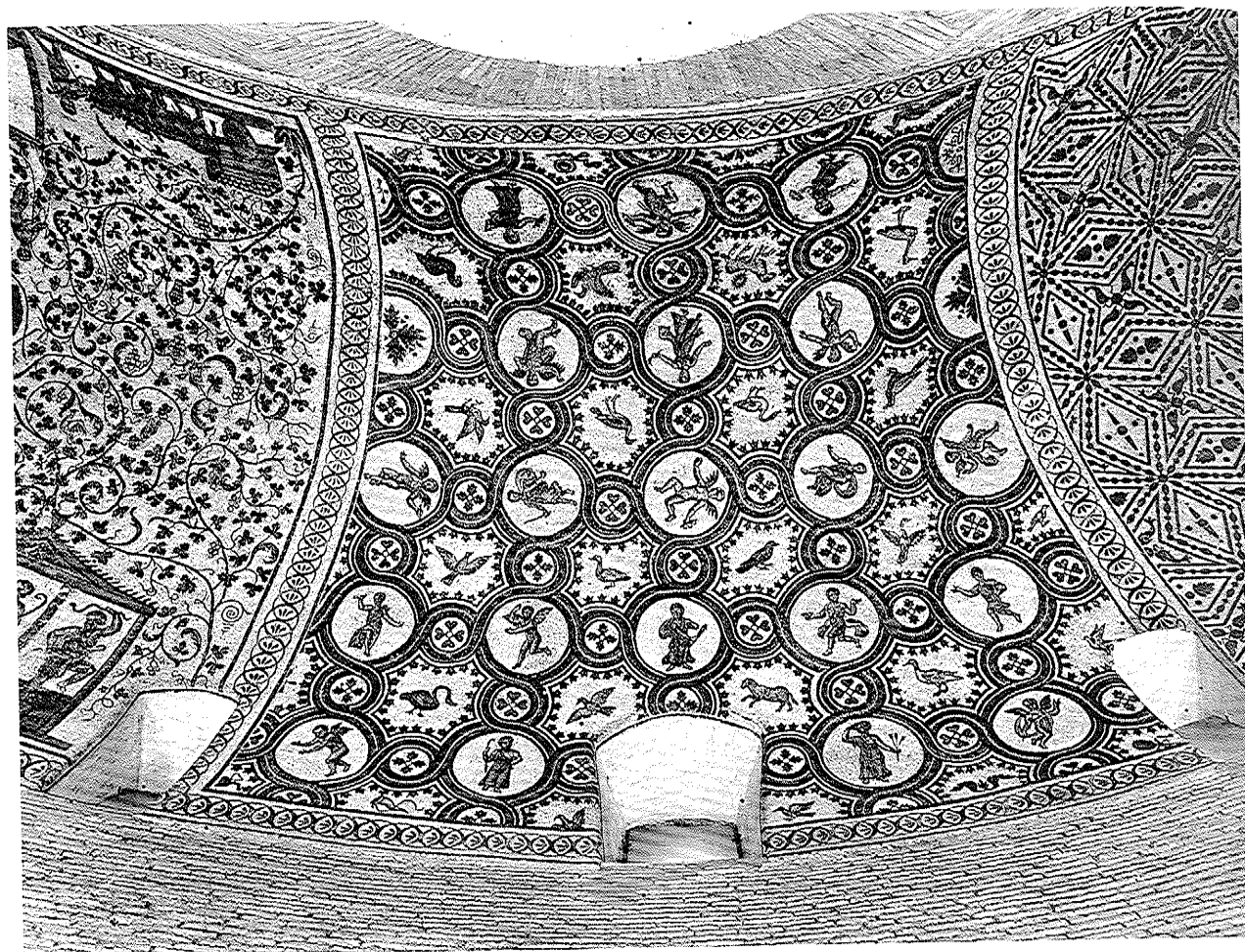


262 Salamis, Cyprus, Gymnasium Baths, detail of wall mosaic showing the river-god Eurotas. Height of surviving portion 1.24 m. Probably third century AD.

fragmentary mosaics from the Gymnasium Baths at Salamis on Cyprus were clearly pictorial in their conception.⁴⁰ One decorated the lower vault of an arch with a scene of Leda and the Swan. In the corner is the river-god Eurotas, named in an inscription above his head, leaning on a jar from which water flows; beside him is part of the swan Zeus, and an Eros flies above (figure 262). A rocky landscape can be seen beneath Eurotas; otherwise the ground is black. Another mythological scene, for which an identification as an Amazonomachy has been proposed, filled the whole of the apse of a niche, with a rich garland running beneath. Only the lower part survives, but enough to show that the figures were set in a receding landscape. The pictorial elements and the naturalism of the figures are found in the better floor mosaics of the eastern Mediterranean at the date when these mosaics were probably executed; and the materials used are those of floor mosaics – marble and stone, with a very little glass for shades of green – while the decorative repertory is common to both media. The gap between the two techniques is not here very wide.

Other examples of mosaics in vaults and apses draw on a repertory of designs closely connected to those of floor mosaics. A vault in the Baths of the Seven Wise Men at Ostia (111.10.2) has designs of vine and acanthus scrolls, and of dolphins with interlaced tails; they are in colour, with some glass tesserae though most are of stone, on a white ground. Colouring apart, they resemble the floral

⁴⁰ J. Balty, 'Les mosaïques des thermes du gymnase à Salamine de Chypre', *RDAC* 1988 (Part 2), 205–18, pls.LXI–LXVIII (with the identification as an Amazonomachy); Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* 25–8 nos.24–6, pls.xii, xiii; Sear 141–2 no.164, pls.60.3, 61.1. The *terminus ante quem* is AD 332/342; Balty suggests a likely date for the mosaics on the basis of style in the first half of the third century.

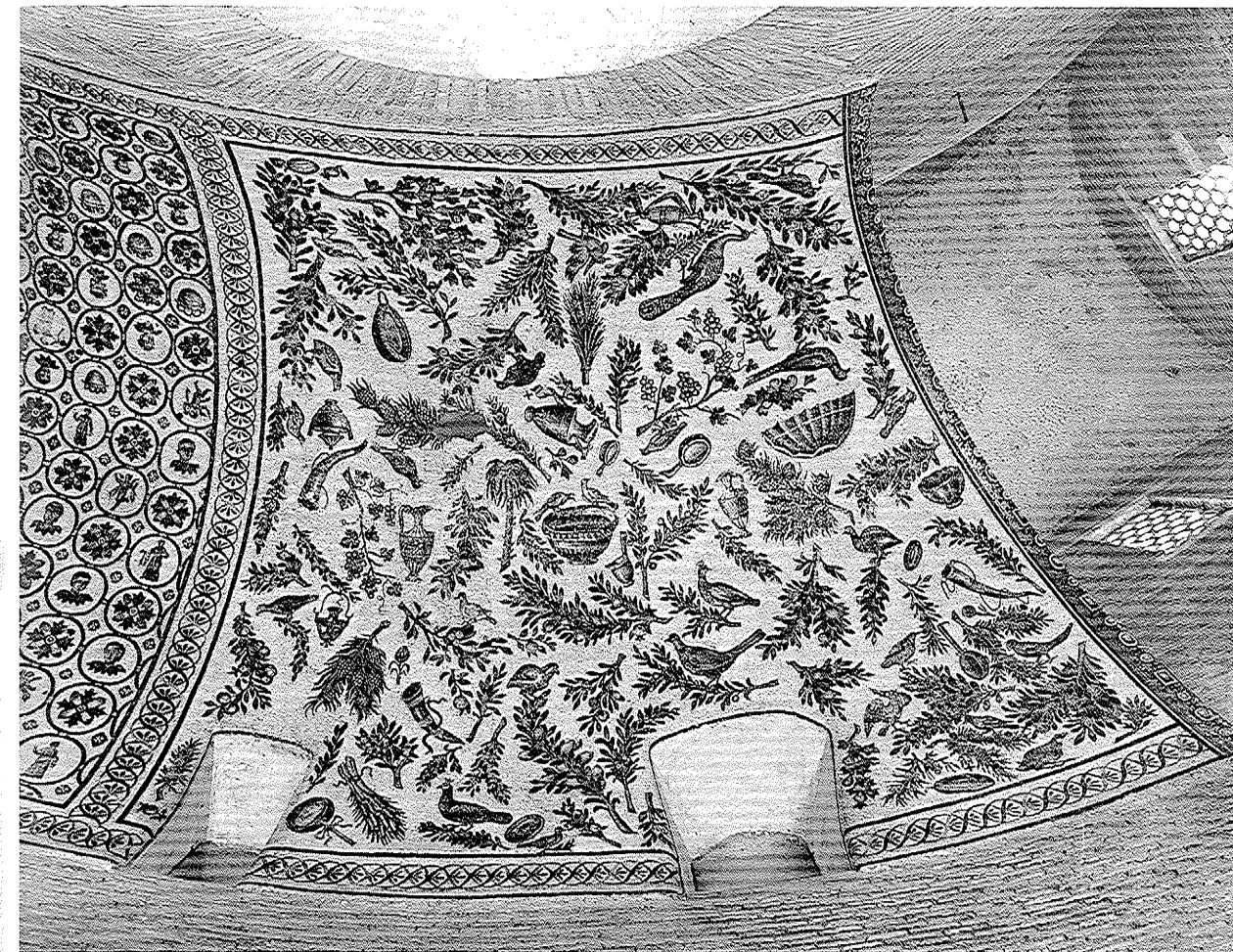


263 Rome, Mausoleum of Constantia, ambulatory vault, panel with Erotes and birds. AD 337–351.

designs found in black-and-white on Ostian floor mosaics of the same period (c. AD 130).⁴¹ Some fragments from the vault of the Antonine Baths in Carthage show acanthus scrolls and laurel wreath in blue and green glass on a ground of white marble; except for the use of glass, they are closely comparable to designs used on African floor mosaics of the second century. It has already been seen that one of the influences which contributed to the development of all-over polychrome designs on floor mosaic in North Africa was the attempt to imitate the work of the *musivarii* on walls and vaults; the two crafts, in Africa at least, were drawing closer together.⁴²

The outstanding example of the interrelationship between floor and vault mosaics may be seen in the

Mausoleum of Constantia at Rome, built around AD 337–51 for Constantine's daughter and now the church of S. Costanza. The mosaics of the annular vault were heavily restored in the nineteenth century, but their basic scheme is well preserved.⁴³ It was divided into a series of eleven panels, with six patterns, five of which are repeated. The designs are in various shades of glass and marble on a white ground. Two of the patterns are non-figured (except for minor filling details); one of these is a geometric design extremely common on floor mosaics, the other is rarer. Both designs go back ultimately to the patterns of stuccoed ceilings, and belong in a long history of floor designs echoing vaults and vice versa. Two more have all-over repeat patterns of circles enclosing figures of Erotes, Psyches, birds, animals, or floral elements: one of these again uses a design long common on floor mosaics (figure 263). Of the remaining two patterns, one consists of vine scrolls with vintaging putti, enclosing medallions at the centre with (apparently) portrait busts, while scenes of the vintage are placed along the sides, just above the springing of the vault; again the composition is closely



264 Rome, Mausoleum of Constantia, ambulatory vault, panel with strewn branches. AD 337–351.

paralleled on floor mosaics, though these in turn may reflect the decoration on vaults. Finally, the last pair of panels contains branches of foliage and fruit trees strewn over the surface, and scattered among them birds (including splendidly decorative partridge and peacock), and a variety of silver vessels; in the centre two doves perch on the rim of a bowl, distant descendants of the Doves of Sosos (figure 264). The closest parallels come from floor mosaics of a type found in North Africa; but the brilliant glass and gold tesserae used on the vault produce an infinitely richer effect.⁴⁴

The scrolls of vine and acanthus belong among the motifs common on floor mosaic, but they were especially well suited for the decoration of vaults, and may well have

evolved first for this purpose. An all-over scroll of vines, bright green on a yellow ground, covered the vault of the small Tomb M, or Mausoleum of the Julii, in the Vatican Necropolis under St Peter's in Rome, and spread onto the upper parts of three of the walls.⁴⁵ On the walls the tesserae have fallen away, leaving clearly visible the preliminary drawings executed on the mortar beneath. Here the vines framed lunette-like spaces, containing figured scenes with Christian subjects: Jonah, the Good Shepherd, and a fisher. At the top of the vault (only two metres high), an approximately octagonal space was left in the centre of the vines (figure 265). In this was a chariot drawn by white horses (originally probably four; two survive), driven by a figure with a radiate nimbus holding

⁴¹ Ostia 4, 136–7 no. 269, pls. A, CLXIX, CCXIX; Scar 112–13 no. 106, pls. B, 46.3, 47; cf. above, ch. 4, section II.

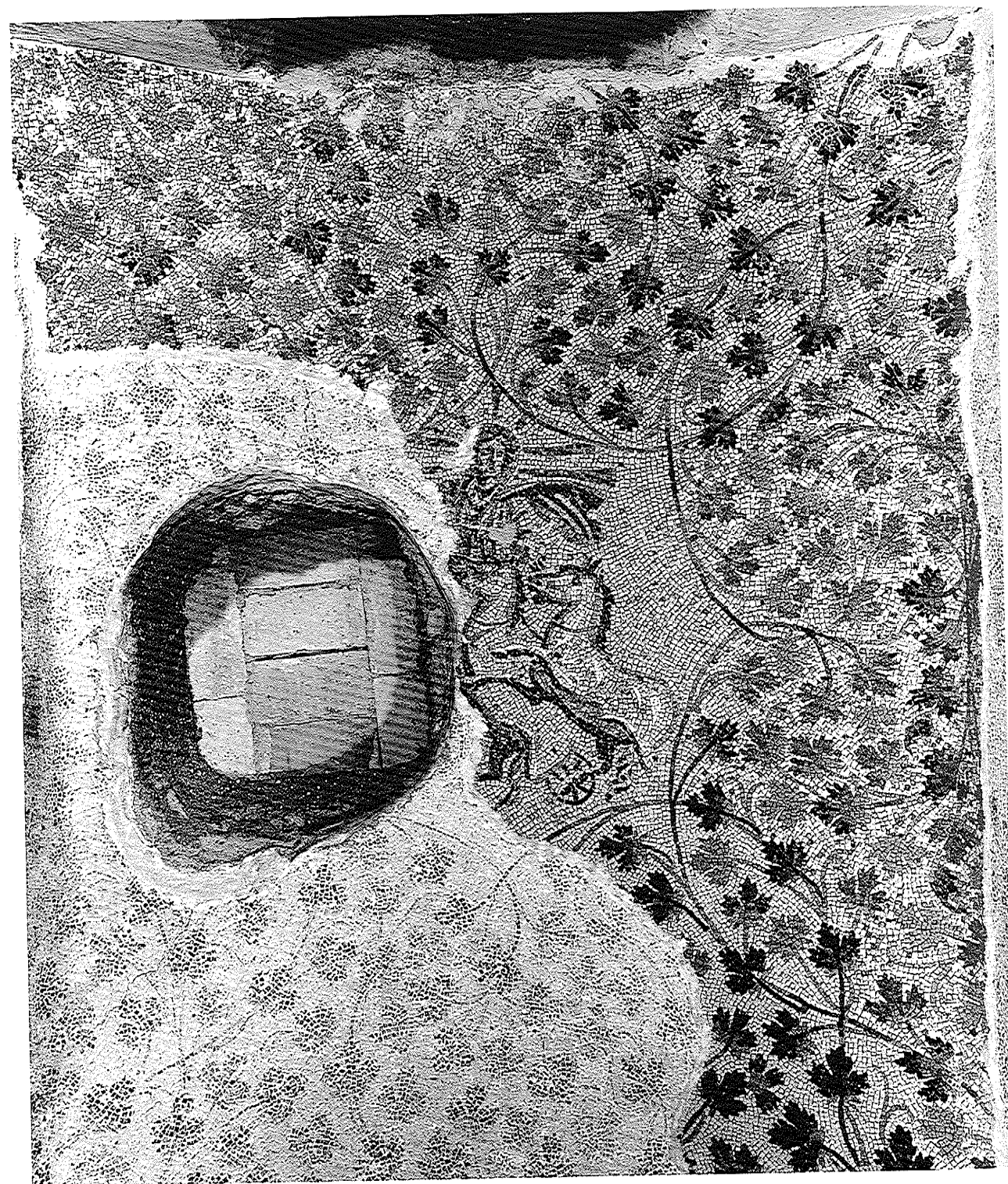
⁴² G. Picard, 'Une mosaïque de voûte des thermes d'Antonin à Carthage', *AntAfr* 15, 1980, 155–68; and cf. above, ch. 7, ns. 15–16.

⁴³ H. Stern, 'Les mosaïques de l'église de Sainte-Constance à Rome', *DOP* 12, 1958, 192–206; G. Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali delle chiese di Roma* (Rome 1967), 3–53, pls. I–IX, figs. 1–26.

⁴⁴ For the compartments with vine scrolls see W. Jobst, 'Die Büsten im Weingartenmosaik von Santa Costanza', *RömMitt* 83, 1976, 431–7. Doves of Sosos: above, ch. 2, n. 29. African parallels for the strewn branches: above, ch. 7, n. 27.

⁴⁵ Toynbee and Ward Perkins, *Shrine of St. Peter* (cit. n. 38), 72–4, pl. 32; B.M. Apollonj Ghetti, A. Ferrua, E. Josi, E. Kirschbaum, *Esplorazioni sotto la confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano eseguite negli anni*

1940–1949 (Vatican City 1951), 38–42, pls. B, C, XI–XII; O. Perler, *Die Mosaiken der Juliergruft im Vatikan* (Freiburg in der Schweiz 1953), pls. I–IV; Scar 127–8 no. 135, pl. 53.2–3. The original construction of the tomb, by a pagan family, is probably to be placed in the late second century; the mosaic is usually dated between the mid-third and early fourth centuries on stylistic and iconographical grounds.



265 Rome, Necropolis under St Peter's, Tomb M (Mausoleum of Julii), mosaic of vault, with Christ as Sun-god. Mid-third to early fourth century AD.



266 Ephesus, Terrace House 2, Dwelling II, mosaic of vault, vines enclosing busts of Dionysus and Ariadne. 3.70 m × 2 m. c. AD 400.

a globe. The iconography is that of the Sun-god; the subjects of the walls indicate a Christian identification, and the figure is usually described as Christ-Helios. The vines form a free design over the surface, with the figured motifs similarly standing out against the uniform yellow ground; the effect is essentially two-dimensional. The composition could equally well have been used for a floor, but it differs in the brilliant colouring of the glass, and in the uneven setting of the tesserae.

Vines also fill a mosaic vault in one of the Terrace Houses at Ephesus (H2/D), the most significant example of the technique in a domestic context to survive from late antiquity.⁴⁶ A niche, three metres wide, opens off one side of the peristyle court, which contains a small fountain; the association of mosaic with water still survives, though only distantly. Mosaic covers both the vault and a lunette on the back wall, which shows a pair of peacocks with other birds, fruit and flowers. Vines grow up from the sides of the vault to cover it with leaves and bunches of grapes, among which light-coloured birds perch. At the base an Eros leads a panther-chariot laden with grapes; in the centre is a medallion with life-size busts of Dionysus and Ariadne (figure 266). The ground throughout is dark blue, with strips of green at the base beneath the figures' feet; the vine-leaves stand out in light and dark green, the grapes in white with touches of red. The figures are very strongly modelled in contrasts of light and shade, and a heavy dark outline emphasises their contours. Glass tesserae are used throughout, with strong colouring but only a limited number of shades of each tone. The effect comes from the contrasts of the colours and the dark outlines around the forms; finer nuances are not sought. The mosaic is dated around AD 400, approximately the same date as the earliest surviving wall and vault mosaics of Christian churches, with which it offers many parallels.

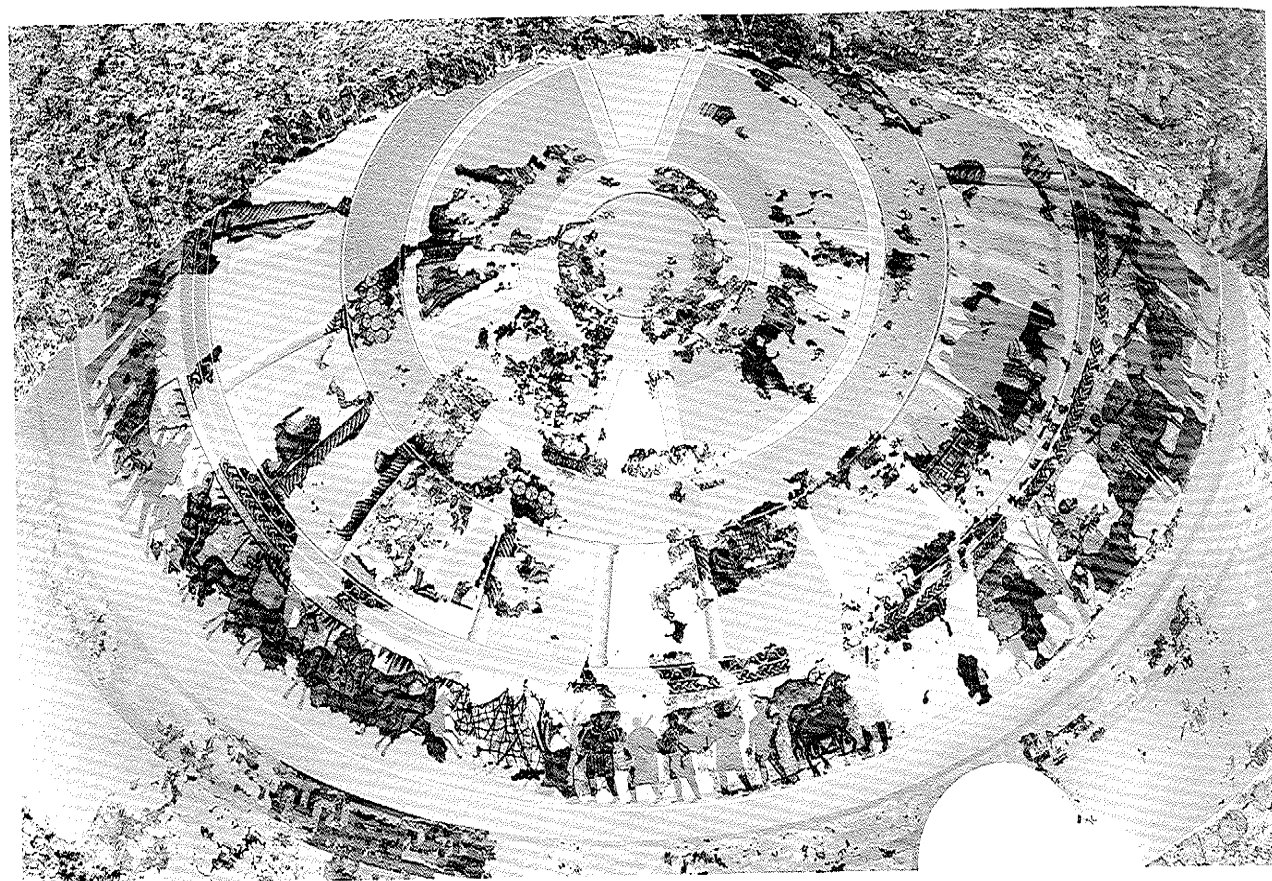
More complex systems were in use by the fourth century for the decoration of domes. At Centelles near Tarragona in Spain is a Mausoleum, which has been suggested to be that of Constans I who died in AD 350.⁴⁷ The dome, which has a diameter of 10.70 m and rose 13.60 m above the floor, was covered with mosaic; it was divided into three concentric figured friezes and three bands of

ornament around a central medallion (figure 267). The lowest frieze shows a continuous ring of hunting scenes; the upper two are divided formally into panels. In the middle zone scenes from the Old and New Testaments are separated by spirally fluted columns, with the background changing from dark to light in alternate panels. The upper zone has standing figures of the Seasons on the diagonals, framed by ornamental borders which separate them from larger panels, very fragmentary, with remains of enthroned figures in scenes of imperial ceremonial, against a largely gold background. The central medallion was also figured, though only two heads remain. In the hunting frieze riders pursue deer into a net, attendants prepare nets, or carry the kill home towards the great buildings of a villa (figure 268). At the centre of a group of hunters at rest is a figure represented frontally with portrait features, clearly the *Dominus*, the owner of the tomb. The composition is comparable to contemporary floor mosaics, with some figures moving against a plain white ground, some in a hilly landscape. But the other friezes belong in quite a different tradition, with an architectonic structure and contrasting colours of background chosen in part for decorative effect, in part on hierarchical principles. Many of the ornamental motifs also belong not to the repertory of floor mosaics but to that of wall mosaic and painting. Tesserae are of stone, marble, and glass, also

⁴⁶ Terrace House 2, Dwelling II: Jobst, *Ephesus* 1, H2/D, 64–74, figs. 110–24; 84–8, figs. 154, 158–61. For the floor mosaics from the same dwelling, see above, ch. 13, n. 8.

⁴⁷ H. Schlunk, *Die Mosaikkuppel von Centelles* (Madrider Beiträge 13, Mainz am Rhein 1988); A. Arbeiter, D. Korol, 'Der Mosaikschmuck des Grabbaues von Centelles und der Machtwechsel von Constans

zu Magnentius', *MM* 30, 1989, 289–331; T. Hauschild, A. Arbeiter, *La Villa romana de Centelles* (Barcelona 1993). The association with Constans is questioned by N. Duval, 'Le contexte archéologique: les villas du Sud-Ouest', in *Antiquité Tardive* 1, 1993, *Les Sarcophages d'Aquitaine*, 44, who points out that there is no sure evidence even that it was a mausoleum.



267 Centcelles, Mausoleum, general view of dome. Probably mid- to late fourth century AD.

arranged hierarchically. Stone and marble predominate in the lower two zones, glass in the upper; gold-glass tesserae are used extensively as background in the upper zone and the central medallion, and in one important panel of the middle zone, which showed the Good Shepherd. All the individual figures have typically late antique characteristics: heavy outlines, colour laid on in contrasting stripes. But those in the lower zone are treated comparatively naturalistically, in contrast to the much more schematic renderings in the upper zones, designed for effect when seen at a distance.

The Centcelles Mausoleum probably belongs within a tradition established by the decoration of lost imperial monuments, regardless of the identification of its owner. Chronologically, like the Ephesos mosaic, it belongs to a period when mosaic was finding a new use in Christian basilicas, baptisteries, and martyria, now being constructed in huge numbers and decorated often with great splendour. The iconography at Centcelles is typical of the fourth-century merging of the old and the new; in the midst of secular scenes which indicate the dead man's

status in this world is introduced a band of Christian scenes which promise salvation in the next. Taken together with the Ephesos mosaic, where traditional pagan subjects survive unchanged in a secular context, it allows us a glimpse of the background against which we should see the great blossoming of Christian mosaics which survive from the end of the fourth century onwards. In Rome itself the apse mosaic of S. Pudenziana, showing Christ enthroned in splendour among the apostles in front of the buildings of Jerusalem, dates from around AD 400; to much the same date belongs the Baptistry of S. Giovanni in Fonte in Naples, whose dome contains scenes from the New Testament and symbolic Christian images, figures of the apostles and the symbols of the evangelists, surrounding the Christogram set against a starry sky.⁴⁸ By this date a full Christian repertoire, both narrative and symbolic, had evolved; the subsequent development lies beyond the scope of this chapter. But it should be noted that elements of the older tradition survive in many of the minor details and much of the ornament. For instance, the band with birds among baskets and branches of fruit that surrounds the central medallion in the Naples Baptistry does not differ greatly from the birds in the Ephesos vault. The Christian

⁴⁸ Matthiae, *Mosaici* (cit. n. 43), 55–75; J.-L. Maier, *Le Baptistère de Naples et ses mosaïques. Etude historique et iconographique* (Fribourg Suisse 1964).



268 Centcelles, Mausoleum, detail of hunting frieze.

mosaics do not belong solely to a tradition that arose in the service of the new religion; the medium was also in demand for secular commissions, both imperial and private.

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Sear; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra*; D. Joly, 'Aspects de la mosaïque pariétale au 1er siècle de notre ère d'après trois documents pompéiens', *CMGR* 1, 57–75; F. Sear, 'The earliest wall mosaics in Italy', *BSR* 43, 1975, 83–97.

Opus sectile

THE TERM *opus sectile* is used in modern archaeological literature to refer to the revetment of both walls and floors with pieces of marble or other materials cut to the specific shapes of a design, and fitted together to form a smooth surface.¹ The technique is related to that of mosaic in its use of discontinuous pieces of material that must be fitted together, but differs in that these pieces are not, like tesserae, of standard shape regardless of the place they occupy in the design. The technique was highly appreciated in the Roman world, in part because of the intrinsic value of the materials, reflecting the general enthusiasm for exotic marbles and related stones, in part because of its difficulty and the virtuosity of the craftsmen. Decorations in this technique were more prestigious than regular mosaic; it is fairly common to find the grandest reception rooms in a wealthy house paved in *opus sectile*, while mosaic covers the secondary or less public areas. The use of *opus sectile* for pavements and for wall decorations followed different courses, although the two techniques are related; they will be considered separately in this chapter.

I Pavements

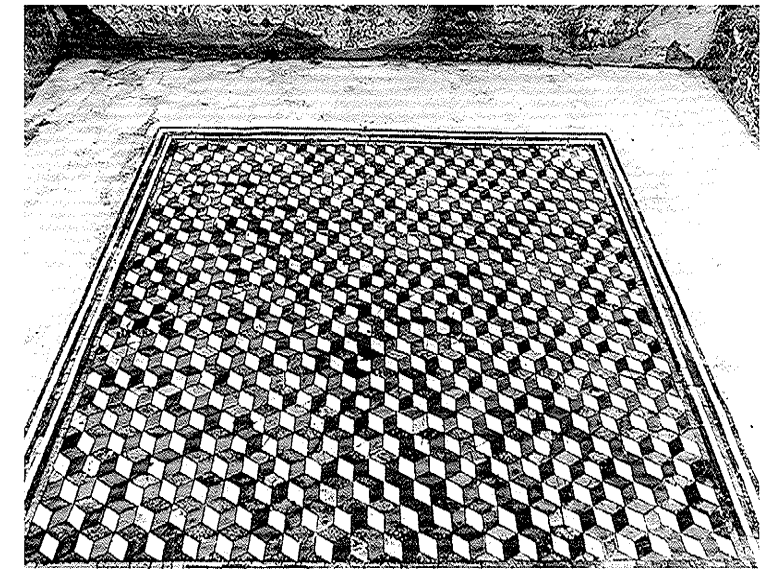
The technique whereby pieces of stone are cut to a specific shape and fitted together to form a design appears in pavements in the Greek world in two different forms. Comparatively simple designs, such as lozenges in contrasting colours, appear at least by the fourth century BC, for instance in the Altar Court at Samothrace.² Such

pavements were a natural development from homogeneous paving, based upon the repetition of more or less identically shaped but chromatically contrasting pieces. Quite different is the use of sectile pieces that appears occasionally in the experimental phases of Hellenistic tessellated mosaics, where some parts of a design, geometric or figured, are cut specifically to shape, while the rest is composed of more or less regular tesserae. Examples of the latter technique have been seen in the Ganymede mosaic and other mosaics at Morgantina, and in the Erotes mosaic from Shatby in Alexandria.³ It appears to have been a short-lived phase which did not affect subsequent developments.

The first form, on the other hand, was developed and expanded. Floors of repeated pieces in simple shapes such as lozenges, triangles, and squares are found in mainland Italy in the course of the second century BC. In Pompeii the *cella* of the temple of Apollo has a central section composed of lozenges of limestone and slate, green, grey and white; around the outside ran a band of tessellated mosaic, forming a perspective maeander. A band of slate bore a metal inscription recording the dedication of the building to Apollo by a local magistrate, the quaestor; it is written in Oscan, the language of pre-Roman Pompeii, and dates to the second half of the second century BC.⁴ The House of the Faun at Pompeii contains sectile pavements in the vestibule, the *impluvium* of the atrium, and the *tablinum* (figure 269). The latter was similar to that in the Temple of Apollo, with lozenges in three colours arranged to form a pattern of *trompe l'œil* perspective cubes. In the vestibule were bands of small triangles in

five colours, while the *impluvium* had a more complex design, small lozenges at the centre of larger ones, surrounded in turn by further small lozenges, again in five colours.⁵ The three-dimensional effects of the *trompe l'œil* cubes are characteristic of the period, and have parallels in contemporary tessellated mosaics.⁶ Also characteristic is the combination of areas of *sectile* with other paving types; this remained common as the technique developed fully in the course of the first centuries BC and AD. Many floors in Pompeii or in and around Rome use a panel of *opus sectile* as a centrepiece or a threshold for a floor of *signinum*, tessellation, or a *crustae*-pavement.⁷

The earliest sectile pavements in Italy are made of coloured limestone and other non-marble materials such as slate. The adoption of marble for such pavements is connected with the growing fashion in Rome in the first century BC for the use of marble, Italian and imported, for architectural purposes, and the great expansion of the available varieties during the following century. This expansion permitted the full exploitation of the chromatic contrasts at which *opus sectile* aimed. The dates at which the various types of marble and other hard stones were introduced to Rome, and the extent of their use, have only recently become objects of study, and are in many cases controversial. The tentative conclusion of F. Guidobaldi is that pavonazzetto (from Docimium, near Synnada, in Phrygia), giallo antico (Numidian, from Simitthus (Chemtou), in Africa Proconsularis), africano (from Teos), cipollino (Carystian, from Euboea), and probably portasanta (from Chios) were all in use by around the mid-first century BC. The expensive and hard red porphyry (from the Mons Porphyrites (Djebel Dokhan) in the Egyptian desert) and green porphyry (also called serpentine, from Laconia) appeared in the late Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods; others are more sporadic.⁸



269 Pompeii vi 12,2, House of the Faun, *tablinum*, sectile pavement with pattern of lozenges forming perspective cubes. c.100 BC.

The favourites remained giallo antico and pavonazzetto, combined in the most luxurious floors with red and green porphyry. But the total range used is extremely wide, drawn from quarries all over the empire. Pieces of a rare material might be introduced occasionally for special effects, but the extensive use of any individual marble obviously depended upon its availability in quantity. Among the more exotic materials are the four species of alabaster used in combination with africano and pavonazzetto in the pavement of a *cryptoporticus*, originally eighty metres long by seven metres wide, in the Horti Lamiani, part of the imperial residence and gardens on the Esquiline Hill in Rome.⁹ While the intrinsic value of the materials, as well as their beauty, was evidently responsible for their use here, the occasional use of glass is rather to be ascribed to a liking for the bright colour contrasts which it permitted. For example, in the *triclinium* of the House of the Ephebe (I 7,11) at Pompeii, in the centre of a more commonplace sectile pavement is an

¹ The Latin term *sectilia pavimenta* ('sectile pavements') is used by Vitruvius (7.1.3,4) and Suetonius (*Div. Iul.* 46). No equivalent term is attested for wall decoration until the fifth century, when Sidonius Apollinaris writes of *sectilibus parietibus crustatus* (*Carm.* 22.146). Earlier Latin writers use various other expressions: cf. below, ns. 37, 38. For other terminology, especially Greek, see P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Η τεχνική *opus sectile* στην έντοίχια διακόσμηση' (Thessaloniki 1980), 17–39.

² K. Lehmann, D. Spittle, *Samothrace* 4.11, *The Altar Court* (New York 1964), 59, fig. 59; cf. A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Mosaïque et dallages dans le monde grec aux époques classique et hellénistique', *CMGR* v, 13–25.

³ Morgantina: K. Phillips, *ArtB* 42, 1960, 243–62, esp. 245; B. Tsakirgis, *AJA* 93, 1989, 395–416, esp. 413–14; above, ch. 2, n. 12. Shatby: Daszewski 103–10; above, ch. 2, n. 18.

⁴ Blake 1930, 35–7, pl. 6.1; E. La Rocca, M. and A. de Vos, *Guida archeologica di Pompei* (Milan 1976), 100. For problems in dating these early forms, see the brief synopsis of F. Guidobaldi, 'Sectilia pavimenta: la produzione più antica in materiali non marmorei o misti', *CCARB* 40, 1993, 159–61; also M. Grandi, 'Motivi in comune nei mosaici e nei *sectilia* più antichi: il problema della priorità', *ibid.*, 133–58, on the relationship between sectile floors and mosaic.

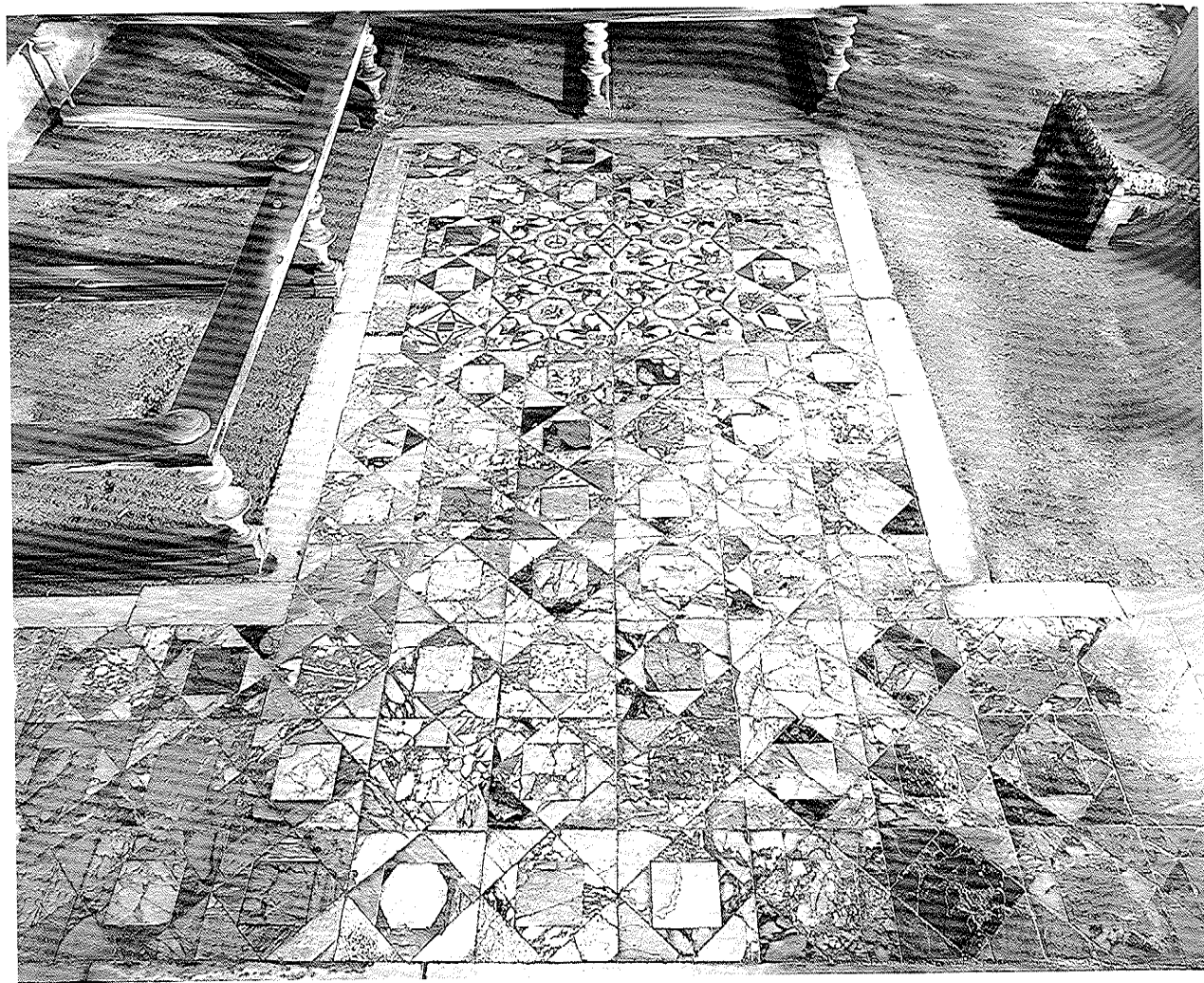
⁵ Pernice 90–2, 125–6, pl. 42.2; Blake 1930, 38–9, pls. 6.3–4. The *tablinum* pavement certainly belongs to the period of the First Style; Pernice proposes a slightly later date for the *impluvium* pavement, but see above, ch. 3, n. 6, for a date slightly before 100 BC for all the pavements in this part of the house.

⁶ Above, ch. 2, n. 39; also ch. 4, section 1.

⁷ Blake 1930, 39–47; M.L. Morricone Matini, 'Aspetti del repertorio decorativo dei mosaici repubblicani di Roma', in: P. Pensabene ed., *Marmi antichi. Problemi d'impiego, di restauro e d'identificazione* (*StMisc* 26, 1981–3 (Rome 1985)), 138–41. For Pompeii, see F. Guidobaldi, F. Olevano, D. Trucchi, 'Classificazione preliminare dei *sectilia pavimenta* di Pompei', *CMGR* vi, 49–61; for Herculaneum, *eidem*, 'Sectilia pavimenta di Ercolano: classificazione e confronto con il campione Pompeiano', *CMGR* vi, 63–71.

⁸ Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti* 223–4. For Roman marbles in general, see R. Gnoli, *Marmora romana*² (Rome 1988), esp. 6–24; for Numidian, M. Gaggiotti, 'L'importazione del marmo numidico a Roma in epoca tardorepubblicana', *Africa Romana* 4, 1986 (1987), 201–13. See also F. Guidobaldi, A. Salvatori, 'The introduction of polychrome marbles in late Republican Rome: the evidence from mosaic pavements with marble insertions', in N. Herz, M. Waelkens eds., *Classical Marble: Geochemistry, Technology, Trade* (NATO ASI series E, vol. 153, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1988), 171–5, on the types of marble present in *crustae*-pavements.

⁹ M. Cima, in M. Cima, E. La Rocca eds., *Le Tranquille Dimore degli Dei. La residenza imperiale degli horti Lamiani* (Rome 1986), 61–3, suggesting a date in the course of the first century AD.



270 Pompeii 17,11, House of the Ephebe, *triclinium*, sectile pavement. Central panel 0.90 m square. Third quarter of the first century AD.

emblemata-like panel; this has a complex floral motif where pieces of blue, green and red glass are used (figure 270). When it was excavated the central panel was found covered by a lead sheet for protection, indicating the value placed upon it by its owner.¹⁰

In the late Empire there was extensive reuse of pieces originally designed for different purposes, shown by their varying thickness, the fact that they do not match, and occasionally by marks of previous use, including inscriptions, on the reverse. The numerous instances where only foundations remain, while the valuable marble pieces have been carefully removed, also testify to the frequency of reuse. The practice continued into the Middle Ages; the floors of several Carolingian churches in and around

Rome are thought to be composed of reused pieces of Roman *opus sectile*.¹¹

The individual pieces of marble vary greatly in size. In public buildings large slabs, occasionally as much as two metres long, were used in simple designs to show off their intrinsic value. In the floor of the Pantheon, for instance, huge disks of porphyry and granite and squares of pavonazzetto, each framed in contrasting materials, form alternating rows.¹² At the other end of the scale are patterns of extraordinary fineness using complex curvilinear pieces which may be as little as one centimetre wide; some of these, such as the Neronian pavements on the Palatine Hill, are discussed below. Works of this fineness were also produced as *emblemata*, at least in the early Empire; two

IV al IX secolo (Studi di Antichità Cristiana 36, Vatican City 1983), 460–85, 518–23.

¹² K. de Fine Licht, *The Rotunda in Rome. A Study of Hadrian's Pantheon* (Copenhagen 1966), 100–2, fig.111; despite restoration, the pattern is surely original.

fragmentary examples found on the Palatine, apparently from the Domus Tiberiana, contain minuscule elements fitted very closely together.¹³ Even large slabs are often quite thin, usually between one and three centimetres; much thicker pieces are sometimes found in the later Empire as a consequence of the reuse of heterogeneous material. In the better made floors single pieces are used wherever possible for the individual elements of a design, at least when these form simple geometric shapes; later even these are often composed of several pieces fitted together. The pieces had to be sawn to the required shape, then ground and abraded to achieve a close fit; the more complex designs require an astonishing accuracy of execution.

The pieces may be laid directly onto thick foundations of mortar, following, more or less closely, the precepts laid down by Vitruvius (7.1.3–4). Imprints left on the mortar frequently attest to the existence of sectile floors whose marbles have been removed. For instance, in the reception rooms of the House of Augustus on the Palatine marks visible in the mortar show that the entire floor was paved with *opus sectile* whose patterns can be distinguished, although no fragment remains.¹⁴ Equally clear imprints are to be seen in the mortar of the great hall of Herod the Great's Winter Palace at Jericho, where an area 29 m by 19 m was paved with *opus sectile*; again no fragment remains.¹⁵ From the first century AD onwards, except in floors composed of very small pieces of marble, the pieces were normally laid upon a bedding. This consisted most often of pieces of terracotta or of sherds from amphora-bodies, occasionally of pieces of porous stone or of marble. These in turn were set in mortar; again, this bedding often remains in place after removal of the marble, and may permit reconstruction of the design.¹⁶

The bedding pieces are regularly set to correspond to the main sections of the composition. Thus in a sixth-century floor at Carthage where parts of *opus sectile* remained in place above a bedding of amphora fragments, there was a clear distinction in the bedding between the pieces beneath the central panel, those beneath its frame, and those beneath the series of squares



271 Carthage, House of the Greek Charioteers, bedding of amphora fragments for sectile pavement, showing lay-out of design. Sides of squares in foreground c.30 cm. Sixth century AD.

of thirty centimetres (approximately one Roman foot) which covered the main part of the floor¹⁷ (figure 271). Examples such as this show that the function of the bedding was not just to provide a stable foundation, but also to assist in the process of prefabrication. In order to attain a level surface, using pieces often of different thickness, sections of the design were evidently made up in reverse, and the bedding material then affixed to their backs with mortar to aid in transportation (figure 272). A similar technique of preparation is found with the panels of glass *opus sectile* from Kenchreai, which were intended for wall revetment.¹⁸ F. Guidobaldi has shown that for the most frequent patterns the process of prefabrication went beyond this: elements were produced in series to standard dimensions based on the Roman foot. The most common of all designs consists of series of squares containing one or more smaller squares inscribed obliquely within them; this could be produced simply by cutting along the diagonals of pieces of identical size sawn from two or more blocks of contrasting colour¹⁹ (figure 273).

The majority of pavements show a system of composition based upon a module repeated over the entire field; only a comparatively small group have a non-repetitive design. The size of the base module varies; Guidobaldi distinguishes three groups, large, medium and small, of which the medium (a module of one to three Roman feet)

¹³ *MosAntIt Palatium* 108–9 nos.97, 98; both have probably been heavily restored.

¹⁴ Cf. Morricone Matini, 'Aspetti' (cit.n.7), 139–40; *MosAntIt Palatium* 47–53, nos.47, 48, 50, figs.18–20; Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana* 248–51.

¹⁵ E. Netzer, 'The Hasmonean and Herodian Winter Palaces at Jericho', *IEJ* 25, 1975, 95, pl.9.

¹⁶ Cf. Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana* 49–55.

¹⁷ K. Dunbabin, 'The Mosaics and Pavements', in J.H. Humphrey ed.,

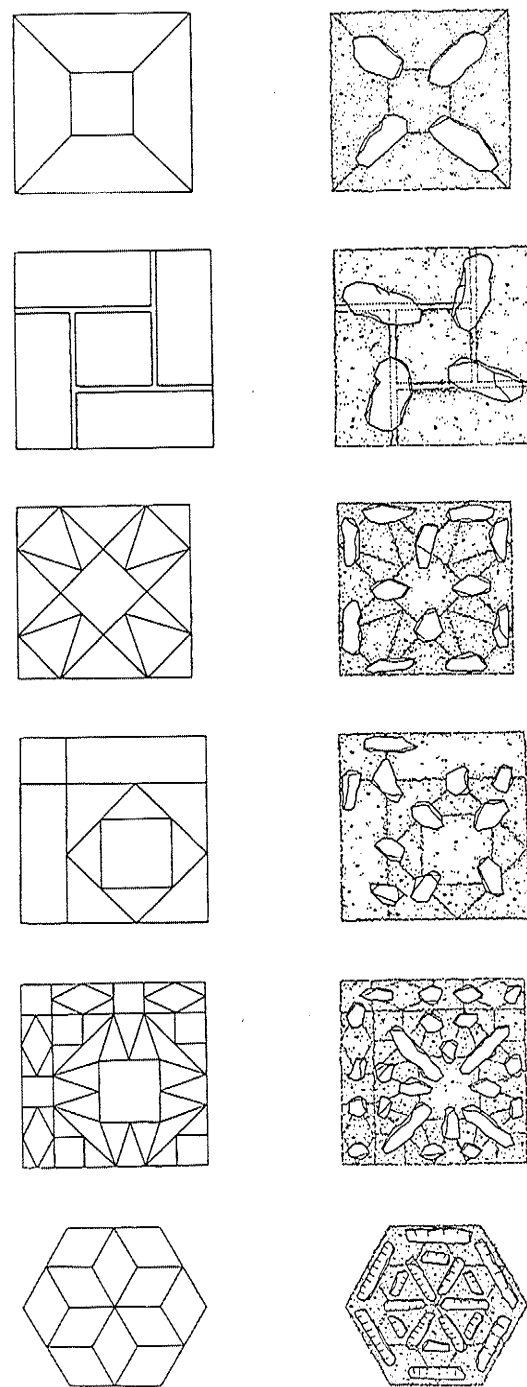
Excavations at Carthage 1975, Conducted by the University of Michigan 1 (Tunis 1976), 31–8 no.3, pls.14–18, col.pls.3–4.

¹⁸ Below, n.49.

¹⁹ Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti* 182–5, esp. fig.5; Guidobaldi and Guiglia Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti marmorei* (cit.n.11), 176–81; Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana* 236–7; also A. Hoffmann, *Das Gartenstadion in der Villa Hadriana* (DAI Rom Sonderchriften 4, Mainz am Rhein 1980), 43.

¹⁰ La Rocca et al., *Guida archeologica* (cit.n.4), 213, fig.p.214; A. Maiuri, *NSc* 1927, 45–6, who speaks also of gold glass.

¹¹ C. McClendon, 'The revival of *opus sectile* pavements in Rome and the vicinity in the Carolingian period', *BSR* 48, 1980, 157–65; F. Guidobaldi, A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti marmorei di Roma dal*



272 Drawing showing fabrication process of sections of sectile pavements in various forms, illustrating positions of support/bedding elements on reverse: based on examples from Hadrian's Villa.

²⁰ Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti*, *passim*; *Villa Adriana* 48–53; cf. below, ns.27, 31.

²¹ *Ostia* 4, 103–4 no.189, pl.ccvii; fourth century.

²² M. Cagianò de Azevedo, 'La tarsia marmorea da Bovillae nel Palazzo Colonna', *RendPontAcc* 33, 1960–1, 197–207; C. Dulière, *Lupa Romana. Recherches d'iconographie et essai d'interprétation* (Brussels–Rome

is far the most common. The base element may consist of various simple geometric forms: squares (much the most frequent), triangles, rhombi, or hexagons, or of combinations of two or more of these. The base element itself is subdivided with fillings which may be of great complexity and variety. Thus the commonest single pattern uses a square module, filled by simple repetition of obliquely inscribed squares. In more elaborate pavements, the square may contain disks, triangles, stars, or points, in various combinations, repeated in contrasting colours (figure 274). The richest of all use curvilinear elements, sometimes of floral derivation, which combine like modern tiles to build up a more complex design; examples discussed below are the Neronian pavements of the Palatine, and some of the later Ostian pavements, such as the House of Amor and Psyche.²⁰

The less common non-repetitive designs are usually centralised: often there is a central panel, while the rest of the floor has a repetitive design. Individual patterns are sometimes of great complexity, with curvilinear and floral elements. In the House of the Nymphaeum (III.6.1) in Ostia, the centre is composed of nine big squares containing disks and alternating with rectangles, surrounded by a narrower band of squares and rectangles (figure 275). The filling motifs of the larger squares are especially rich; one contains a Solomon knot each of whose loops is made up of twelve successive strands of marble, alternately dark and light.²¹

One example only is known of a figured design in *opus sectile* from a pavement: a panel showing the legend of Romulus and Remus from Bovillae, in Latium. It formed an *emblema*, 74 cm by 59 cm, in the centre of a more normal *opus sectile* pavement. The technique is that of incrustation, with the pieces inlaid into a background slab of rosso antico hollowed out to receive them. Most of the figures are lost, leaving only their negative outline in the slab, but the marble inlay of the wolf and one of the twins remains in part.²² The technique is more common in mural *opus sectile*, and will be discussed in section II.

The chronological evolution of *opus sectile* pavements is far from clear. Many designs continued in use without change for centuries, and the tendency to reuse the

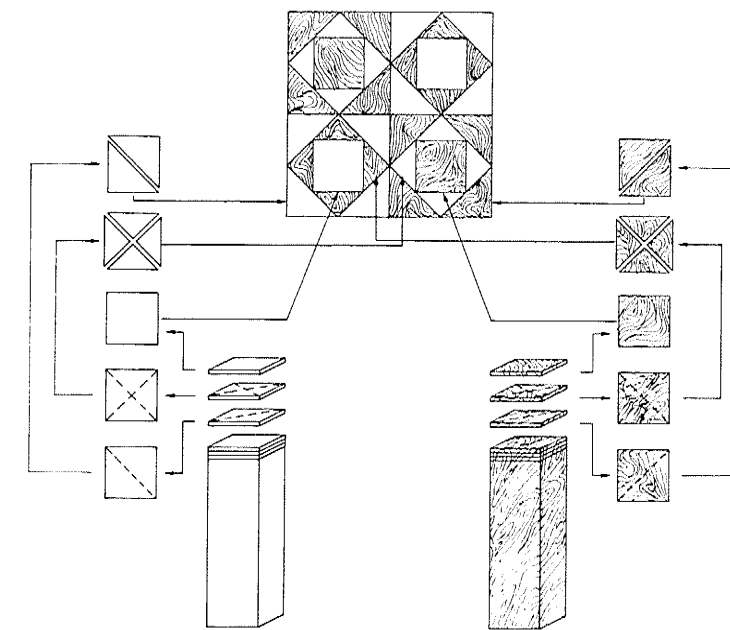
1979) 1, 188–90; II, 57 no.145, fig.129. The panel is ascribed to the fourth century by both authors, though the arguments are not compelling. The background is given as rosso antico in Dulière's catalogue, following earlier publications; the mention of porphyry (much harder to work) in her text and in Cagianò de Azevedo is presumably mistaken.

material further complicates its study. A number of studies by Federico Guidobaldi and his co-workers have made it possible to distinguish certain main lines of development.²³ In the early pavements of the late Republic and early Augustan period, basic geometric forms, often of small dimensions, were used alone or in simple combinations. They are found often in floors of mixed technique, as a central *emblema* in a pavement of *signinum* or of tessellated mosaic, a practice which continues in the Campanian cities into the mid-first century AD.²⁴ In richer houses from the time of Augustus onwards, the area of *opus sectile* (now normally completely of marble or related stones) expanded to cover the entire floor, and the standard types became established.²⁵ The use of small base elements mostly disappeared in the course of the first century AD, while pavements using large elements (dependent on the availability of larger slabs of marble) made their appearance. During the following centuries economic considerations appear to have governed the choice of different types. The use both of large slabs of material and of elaborate compositions was reserved for the richest clients and the grandest settings, while the majority of floors consist of variations on the basic geometric designs using a medium-sized module.

Especially rich and complex designs characterise the period of Nero. In Campania the House of the Ephebe at Pompeii (I 7.11), whose use of glass in the central panels was discussed above, dates from this period (figure 270), as does the House of the Stags at Herculaneum (IV.21).²⁶ The most refined effects are to be seen in the pavements of Nero's own buildings, the *Domus Transitoria* and *Domus Aurea* on the Palatine in Rome. Only fragments remain, but the designs can be reconstructed. The finest, from a hall probably belonging to the *Domus Aurea*, uses a large module (with a base of around 1.5 m), over which is repeated a design of quadrilobes, framed in undulating bands and with disks at their centre, while the spaces

²³ Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti*; Guidobaldi, 'L'intarsio marmoreo nella decorazione parietale e pavimentale di età romana' in: E. Dolci ed., *Il Marmo nella Civiltà Romana: la produzione e il commercio* (Carrara 1990), 55–67; Guidobaldi 'Sectilia pavimenta', *CCARB* 40, 1993 (cit.n.4); Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana*, esp.45–72, 235–66; F. Olevano, F. Guidobaldi, 'Affermazione dei pavimenti in *opus sectile* in redazione marmorea', *CCARB* 40, 1993, 163–74; and the articles cited in n.7 above.

²⁴ Cf. M. de Vos, in F. Bastet, M. de Vos, *Proposta per una classificazione del terzo stile pompeiano* (*Archeologische Studien van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 4, The Hague 1979), 107–17; Guidobaldi, Olevano, Trucchi, 'Classificazione preliminare' (cit.n.7).



273 Drawing showing fabrication process of sectile pavement with simple square-in-square design.

between contain foliate forms of extraordinary fineness (figure 276). The materials are purple and green porphyry, giallo antico, and pavonazzetto. The precision of the cutting is especially apparent in the deeply indented foliate bands and in the foliate stars with ribs of white and minuscule quatrefoil at the centre; it is all the more remarkable in view of the hardness of the two varieties of porphyry.²⁷

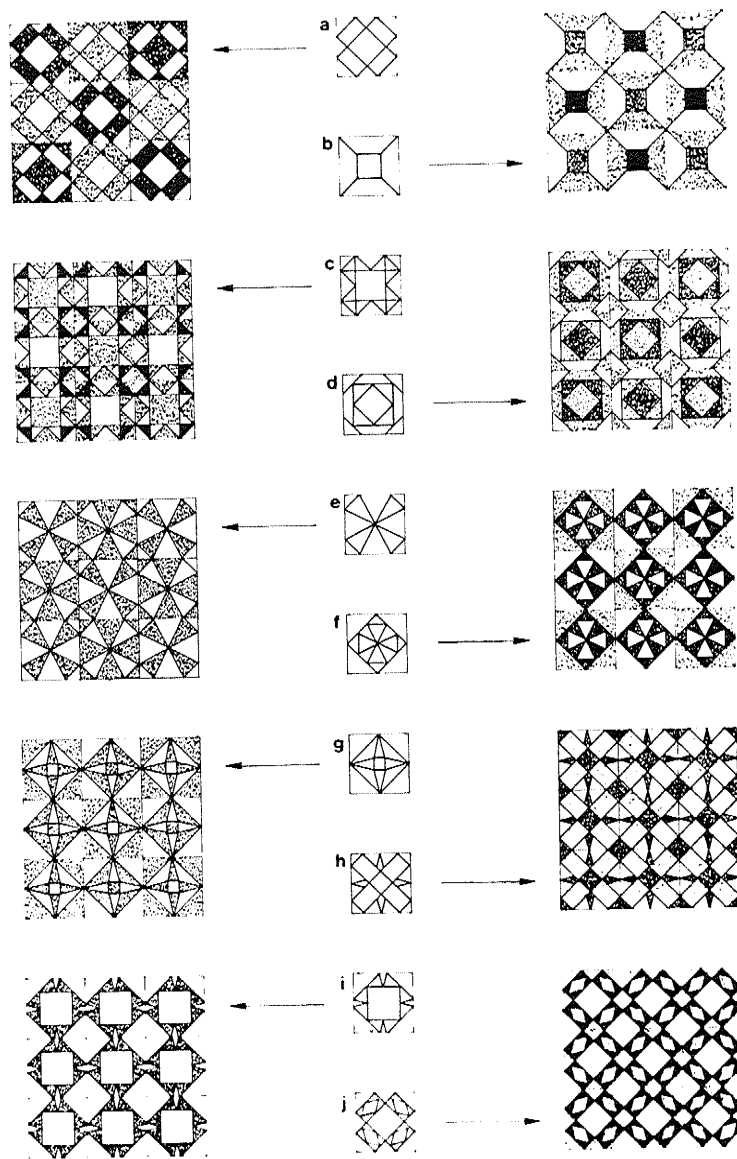
Hadrian's Villa at Tibur was extensively decorated with *opus sectile* in most of its public rooms; mosaics played only a comparatively restricted role. Although much has been robbed, enough is left in many areas to permit reconstruction.²⁸ They illustrate a taste austere in contrast to the exuberant curvilinear and vegetal motifs that were popular in the mid-first century AD. In their place appear rigid geometric designs often of great elegance, with fine fillets of contrasting colours bordering the individual elements. Guidobaldi identifies a deliberate intention to revive earlier fashions of decoration, looking back to the

²⁵ For the early development cf. Olevano, Guidobaldi, 'Affermazione dei pavimenti' (cit.n.23).

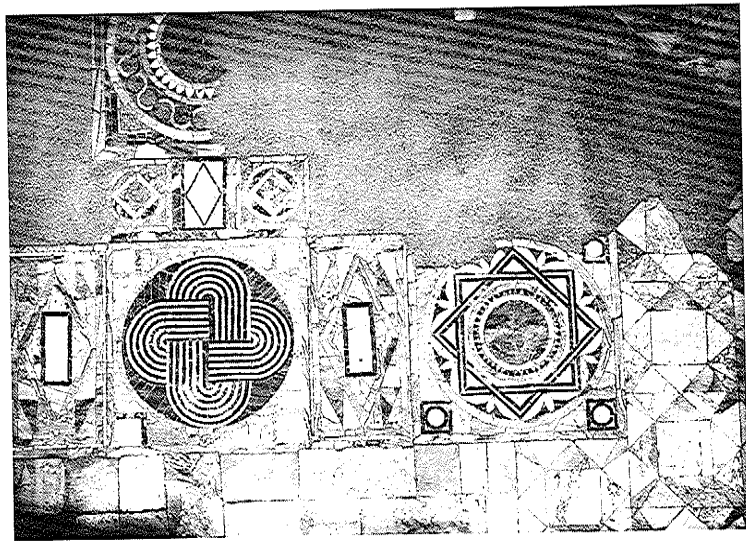
²⁶ House of the Ephebe: above, n.10. House of the Stags; Tran Tam Tinh, *La Casa dei Cervi à Herculaneum* (Rome 1988), 35–7, 137–47, fig.24, pls.vii–ix; Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti* 193, pls.5.3–6, 6.5.

²⁷ Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti* 178, pl.1.4; *MosAntIt Palatium* 68–70 no.65, fig.26, pl.xxx. Cf. also *ibid.*, 63–6, esp. no.64, pl.xxix, for the equally fine example from the *nymphaeum* of the *Domus Transitoria*.

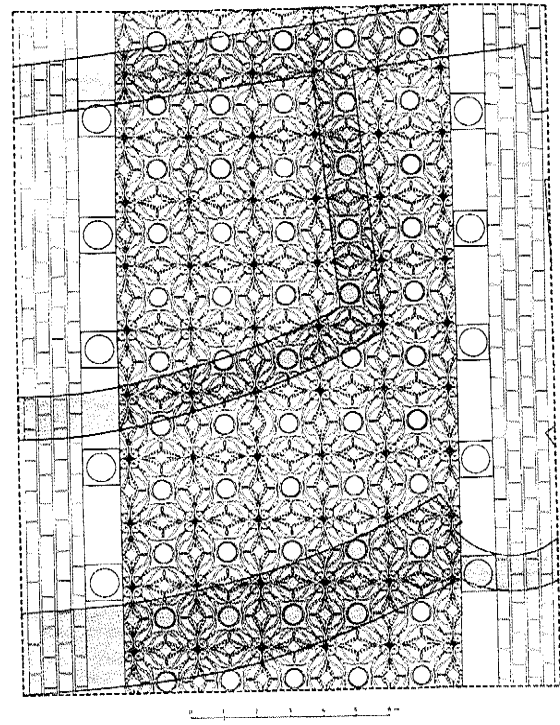
²⁸ Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana*, with summary 235–66; also F. Guidobaldi, A. Salvatori, 'La decorazione pavimentale di Villa Adriana: tipologie, distribuzione e restauri', *CMGR* v, 103–22; De Franceschini 610–13, 682–99.



274 Sample patterns of *opus sectile* based on square module.



275 Ostia III.6.1, House of the Nymphaeum, sectile pavement, central section. Fourth century AD.

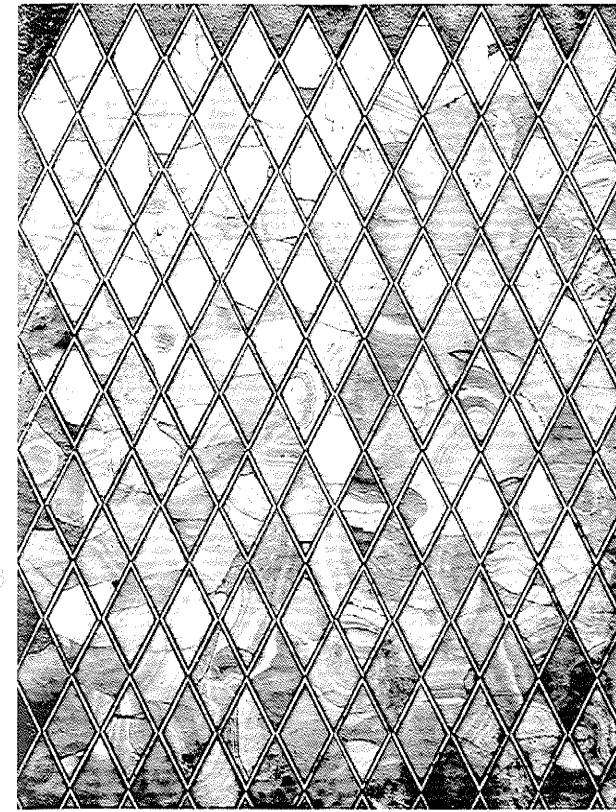


276 Rome, *Domus Aurea* (or *Domus Transitoria*), *aula porticata*, reconstruction drawing of sectile pavement. AD 64-68.

late Republic and the early Augustan period, an archaism which extends even to the use of old-fashioned materials such as slate. At the same time the qualities of the marble are displayed for their own sake, not subordinated to the intricacies of the design and the cutting. Among the finest examples of this characteristic taste may be quoted the pavement from a *cubiculum* in the so-called Valley of Tempe, with a simple-seeming pattern of lozenges bordered with fillets and forming a grid (figure 277). In fact, the lozenges are of two slightly different sizes, alternately with a single and a double fillet as borders, producing a very subtle variation on the standard pattern. The lozenges are uniformly of alabaster, set in such a way that their surface graining varies from one to the next; they are framed in fillets of slate and palombino, only 0.5 cm wide.²⁹

We have little evidence for developments in the later second and third centuries, except that the standard types, based on simple geometric elements of medium size, remained in use. In the fourth century the taste for elaborate designs revived. The aim now is to produce an effect of the greatest possible richness and chromatic variation, though often lacking the accurate execution of earlier floors. Some form repetitive designs covering the

²⁹ Guidobaldi, *Villa Adriana* 217, no.164, pls.XIII/3, LIII, LXIV.



277 Tibur, Hadrian's Villa, Valley of Tempe, sectile pavement of alabaster lozenges. Diagonal of lozenges alternately 0.24 m and 0.22 m. AD 117-134.

entire floor or the greater part of it, as in the late fourth-century building outside the Porta Marina at Ostia, whose wall decoration will be discussed below. The pieces for the pavement here were found apparently awaiting installation, though never set in place: forty square panels, each containing a four-pointed star and at each angle a quarter-circle with an elaborately detailed pelta, which build up to an overall pattern of circles and octagons.³⁰

More often the elaborate fourth-century floors belong to the type with centralised focus. These are well exemplified by the rich private houses of this period in Ostia, whose owners used lavish decoration to compensate for the limited amount of space available. Among these are the House of the Nymphaeum (III.6.1), discussed above (figure 275), and the House of Amor and Psyche (I.14.5). The main room in the latter has the walls

³⁰ Ostia 6, 112-14, 151-4, pls.LXXIX, XC; it would have measured 7.20 m × 4.50 m, with a base module of 90 cm. The materials are giallo antico, red and green porphyry, and pavonazzetto. For the wall decoration see below, ns.45-7.

³¹ Ostia 4, 28-9 no.49, pls.CCIX-X, CCXIX, CCXXI. House of the Nymphaeum; above, n.21.

³² S. Aurigemma, *I mosaici di Zliten* (Rome-Milan 1926), 47, 101-2, fig.63, pl.A, 131-48, fig.76-9, pl.D; Salomonson, *Mosaïque aux Chevaux*, 48-52, pls.XX-XXI; above, ch.7, ns.50, 41.

lined with big slabs of marble, while the pavement has a repeat pattern of square panels, which combine to form quadrilobes inscribed in circles (figure 278). The range of marbles used is very wide, but the dominant effect comes from orange giallo antico edged with green porphyry, standing out against various lighter coloured marbles. Into this are inserted five large panels, four with big disks at the centre, the fifth with a series of rectangles. The overall effect is of great chromatic richness, but the execution is careless.³¹

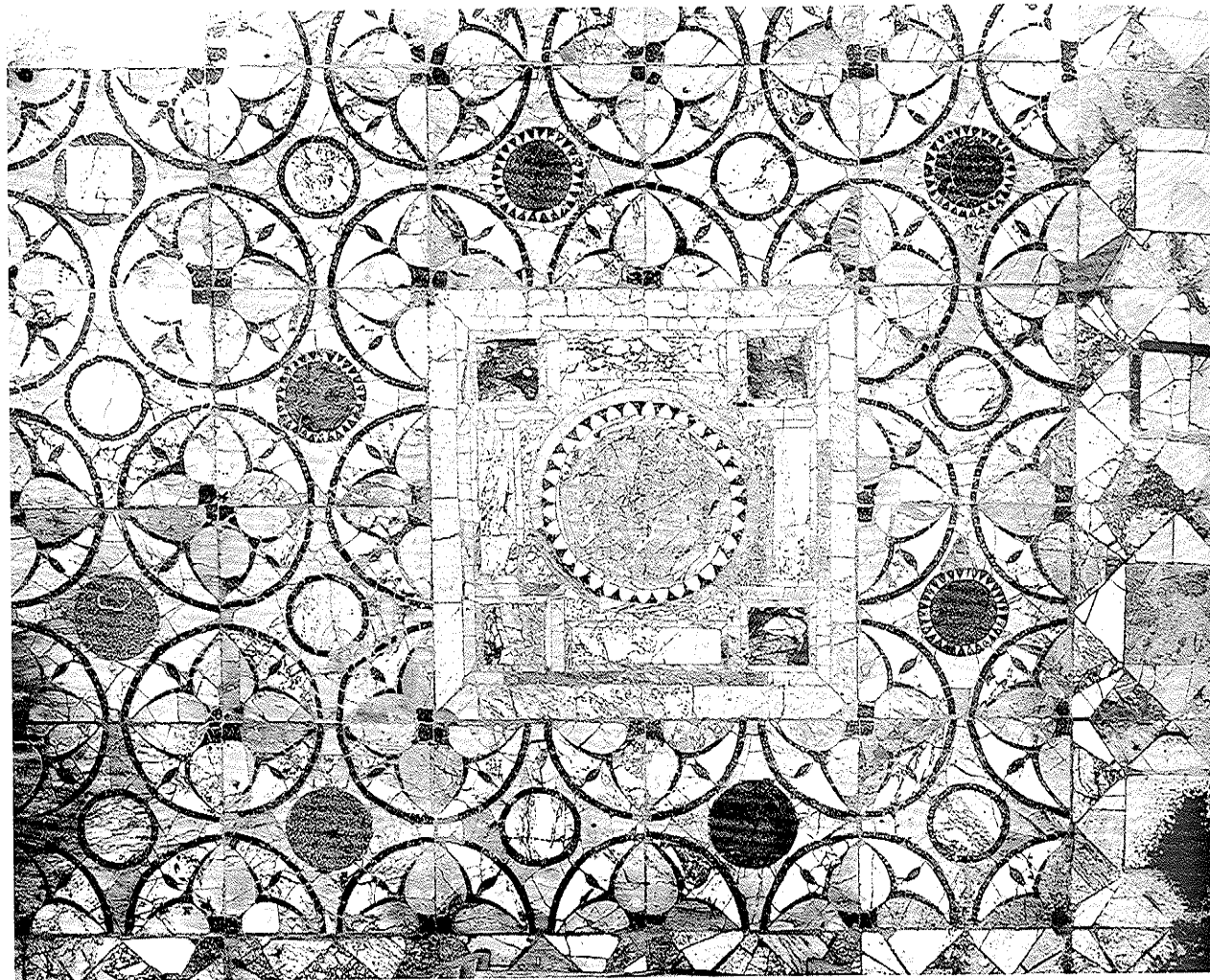
The technique is at all periods most common in Italy, especially in and around Rome, doubtless because the trade in exotic marbles was most flourishing there. However, examples are not lacking in other parts of the empire, though they have been less studied than those in Italy. A substantial number have been found in North Africa; most are of types similar to those in Italy, but a local peculiarity appears to be the combination of panels of *opus sectile* and of tessellated mosaic in a chequer-board, as at Zliten and in the House of the Horses at Carthage.³² Gaul, Spain, Greece and Asia Minor have all produced examples of the technique, but in the present state of our knowledge they add little to the characteristics observed in Italy. The traditional types continued to be made as late as the sixth century in the more settled areas of the central and eastern Mediterranean; then they gave way to forms characteristic of early mediaeval churches, with simple geometric designs composed of small elements.³³

II Mural decoration

The practice of revetting walls with thin panels of marble arranged to form simple geometric designs appeared in Rome in the first century BC; to what extent it had been anticipated in the Hellenistic East is disputed.³⁴ Paintings of the Second Pompeian Style give an idea of the nature of such revetments; an early example is the House of the Griffins in Rome, of c.90 BC, where the painted decoration

³³ For the development in Rome from the fourth century onwards, with many parallels from other parts of the Mediterranean, see Guidobaldi, *Guiglia Guidobaldi, Pavimenti marmorei* (cit.n.11), 17-197, 487-502; for a sixth-century example of traditional type in Carthage, Dunbabin, 'Mosaics and Pavements' (cit.n.17), 31-8.

³⁴ Cf. O. Deubner, s.v. 'Inkrustation', *RE* suppl.VII (1940), 285-93; Deubner, 'Expositio. Inkrustation und Wandmalerei', *RömMitt* 54, 1939, 14-41; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Η τεχνική *opus sectile* (cit.n.1).



278 Ostia 1.14.5, House of Amor and Psyche, sectile pavement, central section. Overall dimensions 7.50 m square. Fourth century AD.

of the wall socle includes lozenges forming *trompe l'œil* cubes, echoing the pattern of the *opus sectile emblema* on the floor.³⁵ As this example shows, there was originally a close relationship between decorations in *opus sectile* on walls and those on floors; but the vertical surface of walls encouraged the appearance of pilasters and other imitations of architectural elements, often projecting slightly from the rest of the surface. From the time of Augustus onwards facings of marble were a universal feature of Roman public architecture of any pretension; rich domestic architecture in turn followed the example of public. The facings ranged from the simplest revetment with rectangular slabs to complex figured and floral patterns; the term *opus sectile* is normally reserved in modern discussions for the more elaborate schemes of decoration,

³⁵ A. Barbet, *La peinture murale romaine. Les styles décoratifs pompéiens* (Paris 1985), 29–30, 37. For imitations of marble in painting, cf. also H. Eristov, 'Corpus des faux-marbres peints à Pompéi', *MEFRA* 91, 1979, 693–771.

and only they will be discussed in what follows. Materials other than marble, notably glass, were used in a similar fashion, and they too will be discussed here.

Two different techniques are involved. The first is *opus sectile* in the strict sense, as we have seen it used in pavements: a design is built up from separate pieces juxtaposed over a foundation layer of mortar or plaster. The second technique is that of incrustation (the term I shall use), or intarsia. Pieces of cut marble or glass are set into a background slab which has been hollowed out to receive them; the background may also be marble, or of a softer material such as slate. Inner details may be indicated in this technique by engraving, and possibly by added colour.

It is in this incrustation technique that figured decoration first appeared, in the mid-first century AD. Its inspiration perhaps lay in the minor arts, where the technique of inlaying hard materials had been practised in Egypt for millennia; examples from a Roman context are three

obsidian cups from Stabiae with inlays of tiny pieces of malachite, lapis lazuli and coral, two showing Egyptianising scenes, the third acanthus scrolls.³⁶ No real precedents exist for the use of the technique on a more monumental scale, which must be assumed to be an invention of the Roman craftsmen. It is surely to this technique that Pliny refers when he speaks of *crustae* shaped into images of objects and animals, and of 'painting in stone'; he attributes the invention to the reign of Claudius and its refinement to that of Nero.³⁷ Seneca, writing under Nero, similarly speaks, not only of walls lined with varieties of marble, but of finishing them off in the manner of painting, as an example of the luxury of his own day.³⁸

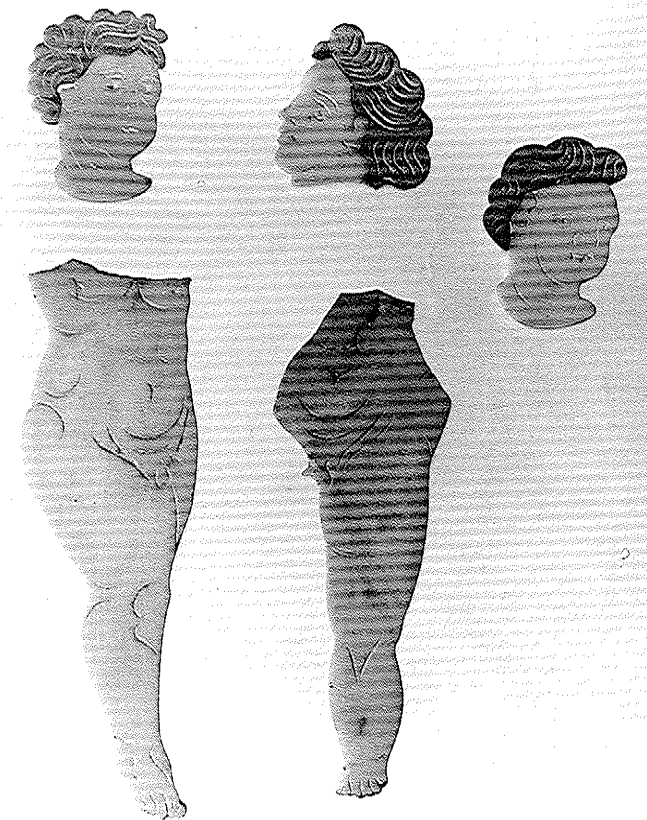
The remains of a decoration in the incrustation technique are preserved from the *nymphaeum* of Nero's *Domus Transitoria* on the Palatine, destroyed by the fire of AD 64³⁹ (figure 279). Tiny fragments include parts of the heads and bodies of Erotes, which would be around sixteen to eighteen centimetres high if complete. Their heads and hair are carefully cut of different materials (giallo antico and palombino) and fitted together, while inner details are engraved. Other fragments of giallo antico represent Gorgon heads, preserved to a maximum height of 8.2 cm, composed of several separate pieces. Other pieces, some vegetal, are in green and red porphyry and several other materials; some are of minuscule size. One piece of white marble is hollowed out to receive an inlay in a vegetal design: one green glass leaf remains in place. The figures presumably formed friezes, and must have been set into predominantly dark background slabs; no trace remains of these, and they were perhaps recovered for reuse after the fire.

Similar decoration is apparently attested in another imperial monument of similar date, the Claudian *nymphaeum-triclinium* at Baiae (Punta Epitaffio). Numerous fragments of incrustation have been found here, including human heads, birds, and vegetal motifs, in a rich variety of materials; they have not yet been studied

³⁶ O. Elia, 'Le coppe ialine di Stabiae', *BdA* ser.4, 42, 1957, 97–103.

³⁷ Plin. *H.N.*35.2–3: *interraso marmore vermiculatisque ad effigies rerum et animalium crustis . . . coepimus et lapide pingere*; cf. J.M. Croisille *ad loc.*

³⁸ Sen. *Ep.*86.6: *pauper sibi videtur et sordidus . . . nisi Alexandrina marmora Numidicis crustis distincta sunt, nisi illis undique operosa et in picturae modum variata circumlitio praetexitur . . .* I take *circumlitio* to refer to a final process of finishing and polishing which could include the inlay or overlay of different materials, as well perhaps as staining or colouring the stones artificially.



279 Rome, Palatine, *nymphaeum* of *Domus Transitoria*, fragments of Erotes from decoration in incrustation technique. Largest fragment (leg and torso left) height 12.2 cm. c. AD 59–64.

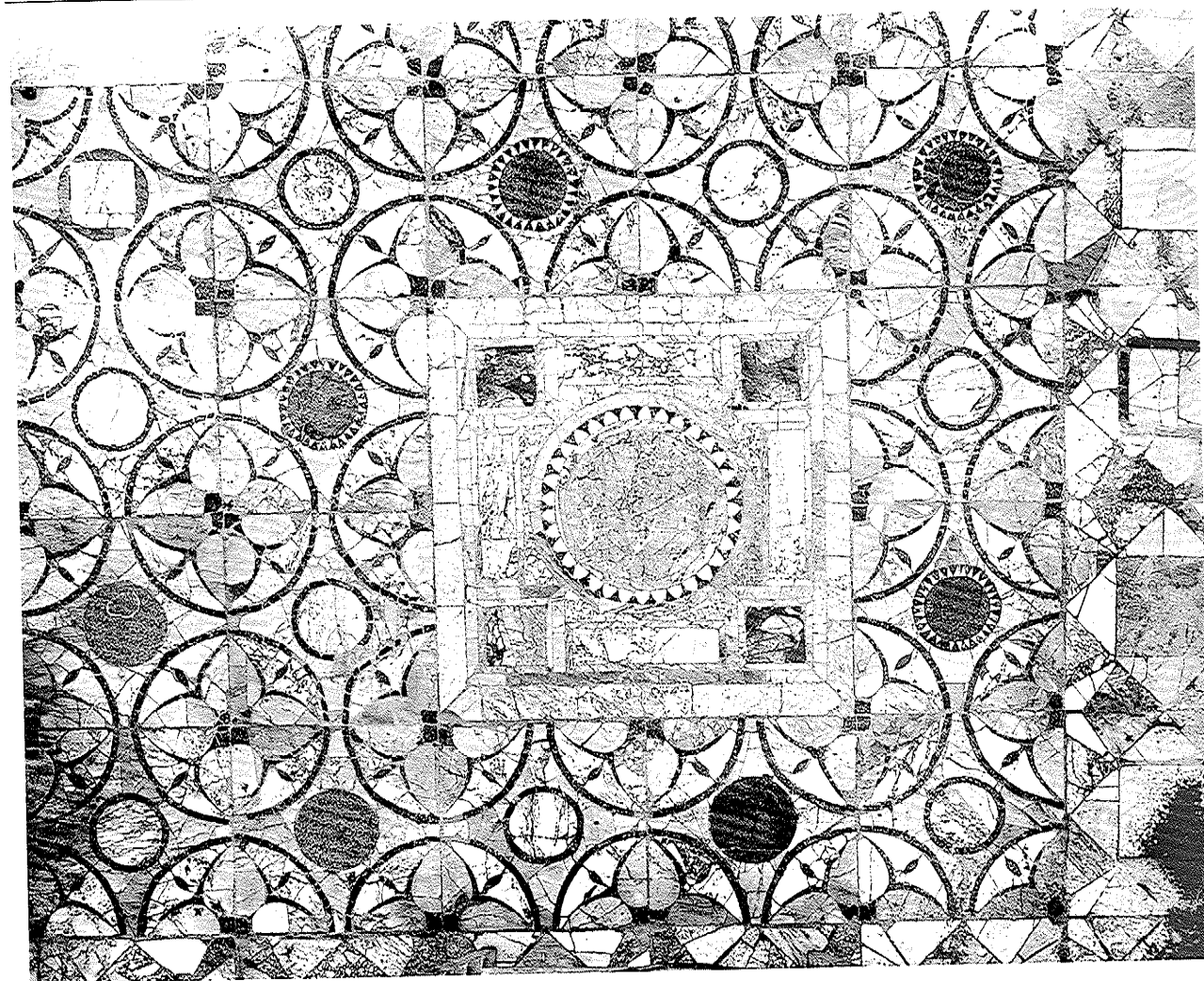
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The incrustation technique continued to be used occasionally at a later date, but only minor details were usually treated in this way. The predominant form of mural *opus sectile* was in a technique comparable to that used on

³⁹ C. Gasparri, 'Appunti sull' "opus sectile" del Palatino', *StudUrb* 13, 58, 1985, 61–7, pls.1–viii; *MosAntIt Palatium* 64, n.2 to no.61, pl. xxxiii; T. Dohrn, 'Crustae', *RömMitt* 72, 1965, 127–30, pls.50–5.1.

⁴⁰ F. Zevi, B. Andreae, 'Gli scavi sottomarini di Baia', *PdP* 203, 1982, 132–3, fig.6; P. Gianfrotta, in *Baia. Il ninfeo imperiale sommerso di Punta Epitaffio* (Naples 1983), 36.

⁴¹ O. Elia, 'Di due pannelli decorativi Pompeiani con figure in "opus sectile" ad intarsia', *BdA* ser.1, 9, 1929, 265–76; Dohrn, 'Crustae' (cit.n.39), 130–1, pls.56–7.



278 Ostia 1.14.5, House of Amor and Psyche, sectile pavement, central section. Overall dimensions 7.50 m square. Fourth century AD.

of the wall socle includes lozenges forming *trompe l'œil* cubes, echoing the pattern of the *opus sectile emblema* on the floor.³⁵ As this example shows, there was originally a close relationship between decorations in *opus sectile* on walls and those on floors; but the vertical surface of walls encouraged the appearance of pilasters and other imitations of architectural elements, often projecting slightly from the rest of the surface. From the time of Augustus onwards facings of marble were a universal feature of Roman public architecture of any pretension; rich domestic architecture in turn followed the example of public. The facings ranged from the simplest revetment with rectangular slabs to complex figured and floral patterns; the term *opus sectile* is normally reserved in modern discussions for the more elaborate schemes of decoration,

³⁵ A. Barbet, *La peinture murale romaine. Les styles décoratifs pompéiens* (Paris 1985), 29–30, 37. For imitations of marble in painting, cf. also H. Eristov, 'Corpus des faux-marbres peints à Pompéi', *MEFRA* 91, 1979, 693–771.

and only they will be discussed in what follows. Materials other than marble, notably glass, were used in a similar fashion, and they too will be discussed here.

Two different techniques are involved. The first is *opus sectile* in the strict sense, as we have seen it used in pavements: a design is built up from separate pieces juxtaposed over a foundation layer of mortar or plaster. The second technique is that of incrustation (the term I shall use), or intarsia. Pieces of cut marble or glass are set into a background slab which has been hollowed out to receive them; the background may also be marble, or of a softer material such as slate. Inner details may be indicated in this technique by engraving, and possibly by added colour.

It is in this incrustation technique that figured decoration first appeared, in the mid-first century AD. Its inspiration perhaps lay in the minor arts, where the technique of inlaying hard materials had been practised in Egypt for millennia; examples from a Roman context are three

obsidian cups from Stabiae with inlays of tiny pieces of malachite, lapis lazuli and coral, two showing Egyptianising scenes, the third acanthus scrolls.³⁶ No real precedents exist for the use of the technique on a more monumental scale, which must be assumed to be an invention of the Roman craftsmen. It is surely to this technique that Pliny refers when he speaks of *crustae* shaped into images of objects and animals, and of 'painting in stone'; he attributes the invention to the reign of Claudius and its refinement to that of Nero.³⁷ Seneca, writing under Nero, similarly speaks, not only of walls lined with varieties of marble, but of finishing them off in the manner of painting, as an example of the luxury of his own day.³⁸

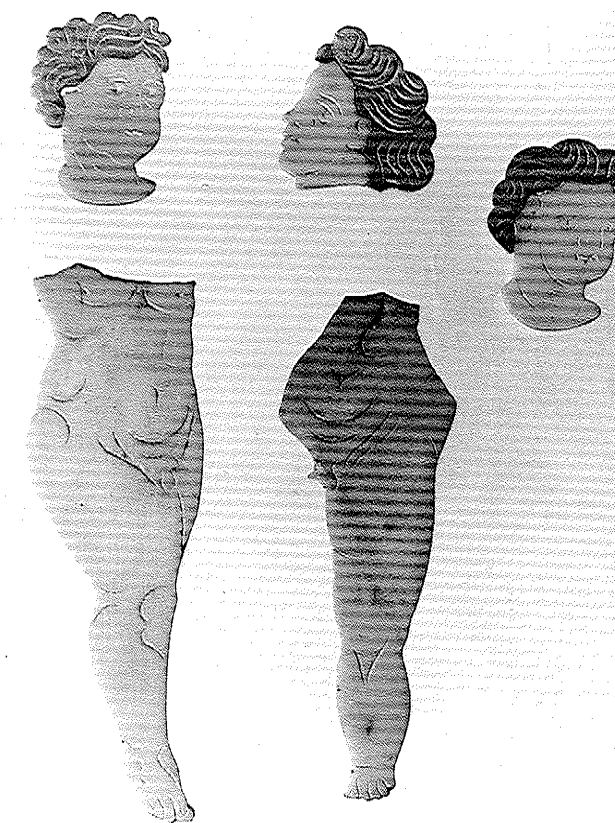
The remains of a decoration in the incrustation technique are preserved from the *nymphaeum* of Nero's *Domus Transitoria* on the Palatine, destroyed by the fire of AD 64³⁹ (figure 279). Tiny fragments include parts of the heads and bodies of Erotes, which would be around sixteen to eighteen centimetres high if complete. Their heads and hair are carefully cut of different materials (giallo antico and palombino) and fitted together, while inner details are engraved. Other fragments of giallo antico represent Gorgon heads, preserved to a maximum height of 8.2 cm, composed of several separate pieces. Other pieces, some vegetal, are in green and red porphyry and several other materials; some are of minuscule size. One piece of white marble is hollowed out to receive an inlay in a vegetal design: one green glass leaf remains in place. The figures presumably formed friezes, and must have been set into predominantly dark background slabs; no trace remains of these, and they were perhaps recovered for reuse after the fire.

Similar decoration is apparently attested in another imperial monument of similar date, the Claudian *nymphaeum-triclinium* at Baiae (Punta Epitaffio). Numerous fragments of incrustation have been found here, including human heads, birds, and vegetal motifs, in a rich variety of materials; they have not yet been studied

³⁶ O. Elia, 'Le coppe ialine di Stabiae', *BdA* ser.4, 42, 1957, 97–103.

³⁷ Plin. *H.N.*35.2–3: *interraso marmore vermiculatisque ad effigies rerum et animalium crustis . . . coepimus et lapide pingere*; cf. J.M. Croisille *ad loc.*

³⁸ Sen. *Ep.*86.6: *pauper sibi videtur et sordidus . . . nisi Alexandrina marmora Numidicis crustis distincta sunt, nisi illis undique operosa et in picturae modum variata circumlitio praetexitur . . .* I take *circumlitio* to refer to a final process of finishing and polishing which could include the inlay or overlay of different materials, as well perhaps as staining or colouring the stones artificially.



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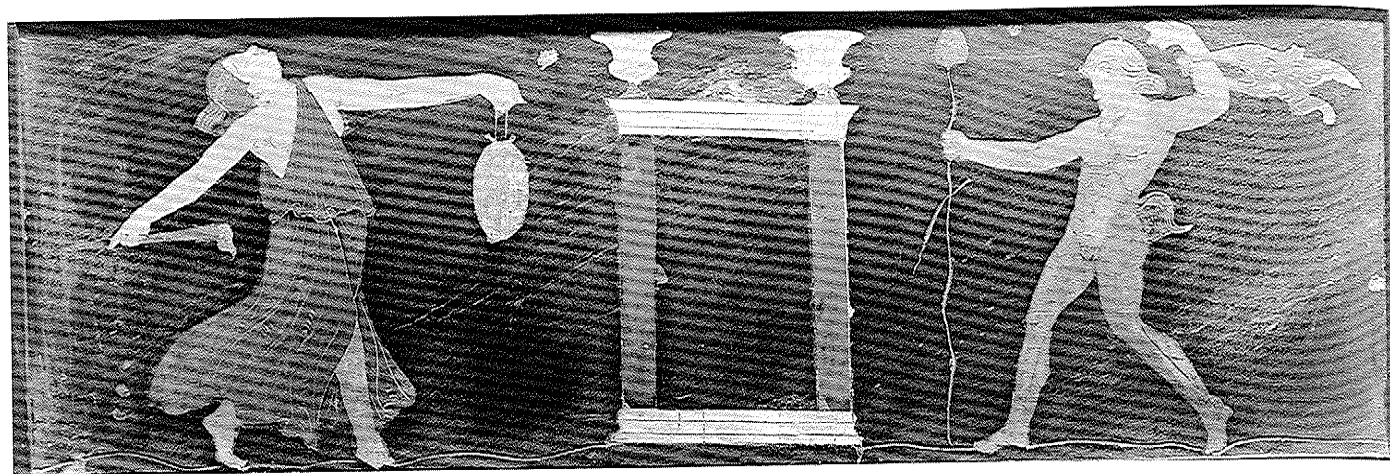
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⁴⁰ F. Zevi, B. Andrae, 'Gli scavi sottomarini di Baia', *PdP* 203, 1982, 132–3, fig.6; P. Gianfrotta, in *Baia. Il ninfeo imperiale sommerso di Punta Epitaffio* (Naples 1983), 36.

⁴¹ O. Elia, 'Di due pannelli decorativi Pompeiani con figure in "opus sectile" ad intarsia', *BdA* ser.1, 9, 1929, 265–76; Dohrn, 'Crustae' (cit.n.39), 130–1, pls.56–7.



280 Pompeii VII 4,31/51, House of the Coloured Capitals, Dionysiac frieze in incrustation technique. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Height 0.23 m. Probably third quarter of the first century AD.

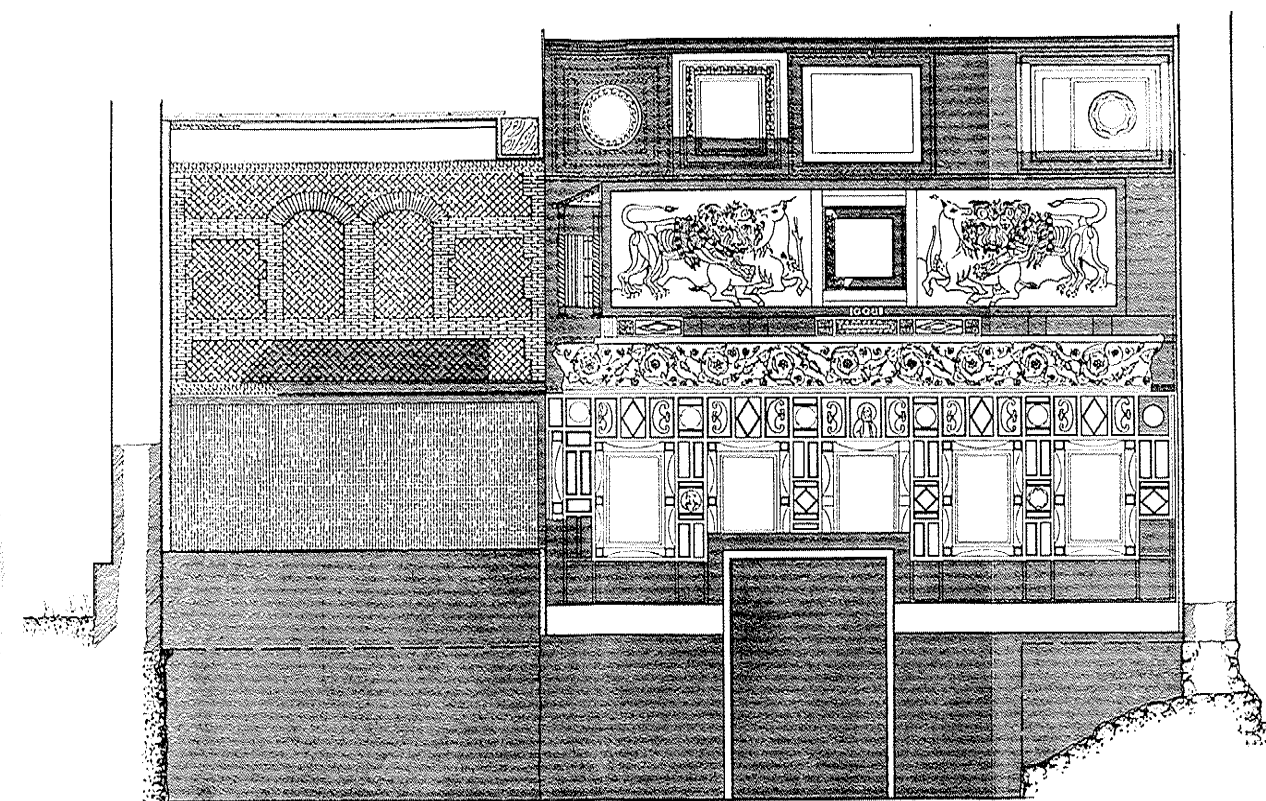
floors, with the pieces simply juxtaposed. It was very widespread in both east and west of the empire, in compositions ranging from architectonic schemes framing geometric panels to intricate floral designs. These continued to be used, often in very elaborate form, to decorate the walls of early Byzantine churches of the fifth and sixth centuries, such as the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.⁴²

Figured decoration does not seem to have been used in the regular *opus sectile* technique, as opposed to incrustation, until the late Empire. What appears to be the earliest example is the head of the Sun-god from the Mithraeum of Santa Prisca in Rome, 0.33 m. high, dated by the excavators to the first half of the third century AD.⁴³ The face was composed of several pieces of giallo antico, carefully fitted together; the hair of innumerable separate locks of various red and green marbles; eyes, eyebrows, and mouth were separately inlaid. It is reported to have been set against a blue background, now lost. Unfortunately nothing is known of its context or original setting; but both in scale and workmanship it belongs in a different category from the miniature incrustations just discussed.

In the fourth century designs of *opus sectile*, figured, floral, architectural and ornamental, were used on a large scale to cover entire walls and rooms. Two outstanding examples are known in Rome and its vicinity, the Basilica of Junius Bassus in Rome and the Building outside the Porta Marina in Ostia. The Basilica, whose builder Junius

Bassus was consul in AD 331, was discovered in the Renaissance, and most of its decoration subsequently destroyed; drawings made by Giuliano da Sangallo in the late fifteenth century record its original appearance, though not all the details are reliable. They show the walls, originally around fifteen metres high, covered with extensive architectural and geometric decoration, all in *opus sectile*, with figured panels in the area between the windows. Four of these survive, though much restored. Two show tigers devouring their prey, the other two show the Rape of Hylas by the Nymphs (plate 38), and a Roman magistrate advancing in a two-horse chariot, escorted by figures representing the four factions of the circus. Beneath the scene of Hylas remains part of a sumptuous hanging curtain, with a border of Egyptianising figures; these are miniature in scale and brilliantly coloured, with tiny pieces of glass paste used for their costumes, wigs, and attributes. The larger figures are composed of slabs of marble and glass fitted carefully together; sometimes one piece corresponds to a major anatomical division, but other collocations are arbitrary. Features such as eyes and mouth are inlaid, though a few minor details are engraved.⁴⁴

The aesthetic taste expressed in these panels is characteristic of the fourth century. The technique is by definition almost entirely two-dimensional; the figures stand out against a neutral background, anatomical structure can only be approximated. Although the figures in the Hylas panel are based presumably on classical proto-



281 Ostia, Building outside Porta Marina, hall with *opus sectile*, reconstruction drawing. Late fourth century to early fifth century AD.

types, the scene of the magistrate shows the new aesthetic of late antiquity. Inorganic, squat figures are flattened onto a single plane; the faces are reduced to a smooth oval, in which the big round eyes stand out. The aim is to create a surface covering of great richness, in which the figured scenes are only minor details, to be seen at a considerable height. All the more astonishing, therefore, is the complexity of the Egyptianising border of the curtain beneath the scene of Hylas: its brilliant patches of orange, turquoise and yellow create an impression of jewel-like richness.

The Ostia building was excavated in 1959, and the remains of *opus sectile* found in it carefully collected and restored, so that it was possible to reconstruct the original appearance (figure 281). They decorated a hall opening off a colonnaded piazza outside the Porta Marina; Becatti suggests that it may have belonged to a wealthy corporation or association. A coin found in the mortar gave a *terminus post quem* of the reign of Maximus (383–8); it is unlikely to be much later than this.⁴⁵ The decoration was never completed; the walls and ceiling apparently fell in, causing its abandonment. The walls were covered to a height of around 7.82 m, though the lower 2.50 m were

still bare. In the main part of the room the central zone is predominantly architectural-geometric; big panels alternate with upright pilaster strips, and a frieze runs along the top. The central panel of this frieze, forty centimetres high, contains a bust usually identified as that of Christ, nimbed and making a gesture of benediction, on a porphyry ground. Above the frieze runs an elaborate floral scroll of extraordinary delicacy, with leaves of giallo antico and whitish palombino on a ground of green porphyry; the freely waving tendrils are often less than one centimetre wide (plate 39). Above this again the upper zone contained large panels: two lions tearing stags on one side (plate 40), more fragmentary tigers on the other. Although the subject is the same as that of the Junius Bassus panels, the execution is much finer. The lions are masterpieces of their technique, with a multitude of curving pieces fitted together so that their shape brings out the volume of the body; especially effective are the flame-like curls of the mane. By a particular refinement, the pieces of giallo antico have been heated to take on a reddish tinge along their edges, which helps to impart a

⁴⁵ Ostia 6, esp. 49–71; for the pavement see above, n. 30.

⁴² Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Η τεχνική *opus sectile* (cit. n. 1), 43–106; for later examples of the incrustation technique cf. *ibid.* 56–62; Dohrn, *ibid.*, 135–8.

⁴³ M. Vermaseren, C. C. van Essen, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leiden 1965), 442, no. 27, pls. xxxv–xxxvi.

⁴⁴ Ostia 6, 181–215, pls. XLIV–XLVII, LI–II, LXXXI–III, with earlier refs.; R. Paris, 'Il pannello con Hylas e le Ninfe dalla Basilica di Giunio Basso', *BolldArch* 1–2, 1990, 194–202; Paris, 'I pannelli in *opus sectile* dalla Basilica di Giunio Basso: osservazioni sul pannello con biga e fazioni del circo', *BolldArch* 7, 1991, 91–7.

sense of volume.⁴⁶ The stags are composed of large pieces of bluish-grey marble, corresponding to the main divisions of the body, and shaped so that they too suggest, more simply, its volume.

At the end of the room, a pair of pilaster slabs flanked the entrance to a rectangular *exedra*. Equally fine floral scrolls inhabited by tiny birds and butterflies covered the pilasters. The interior of the *exedra* was also covered with *opus sectile*, but this was non-figured. The lower part consisted of a chequer-board of giallo antico, red and green porphyry, and pavonazzetto. The area above uses the same four materials to imitate the type of masonry known as *opus mixtum*, with bands and arches of brickwork framing sections of *opus reticulatum*. Simple though this decoration was, its preparation nevertheless required a phenomenal amount of work. Becatti has counted a total of 30,960 blocks preserved from the lower chequer-board; in the upper section every 'brick' and 'block' is framed by thin strips of white limestone representing the mortar of the masonry. In subject it is unique, and surprising. Real walls of *opus mixtum* were usually covered, in buildings of any pretension, with plaster or with marble revetment; here is a rare case of the marble revetment itself imitating the humbler material. Moreover the masonry technique, characteristic of the first to second century AD, was long obsolete by this date, although innumerable examples must have been visible in Ostia. There seems to be a conscious antiquarianism at work here, a deliberate allusion to the typical Ostian architecture of two to three centuries earlier; the imitation in much more valuable material would make it all the more conspicuous. This architectonic decoration was clearly intended for a backdrop, perhaps for banqueters reclining in the *exedra*, their attention turned to the more elaborately decorated front room, in which performances and ceremonies were to be held. Such ceremonies were surely secular. If the nimbed bust, small and inserted unobtrusively over a door at the side, is indeed that of Christ, it may act as protector, but the Christianisation of the decoration is at best superficial.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ This technique may be seen also in the head of Sol from the Santa Prisca Mithraeum, above, n.43.

⁴⁷ Becatti suggests (*Ostia* 6, 165–70) that some small fragments, perhaps from the architrave of the *exedra*, may have had a Christian significance, but this is very hypothetical. P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford 1995), 315–19, has questioned whether the bust is indeed that of Christ, an identification which rests upon the presence of the nimbus, and suggests plausibly that it may represent a pagan teacher and holy man.

Glass was used occasionally for special colours or effects in several of the elaborate mural decorations in *opus sectile* discussed above. It was also used for complete panels of *opus sectile* handled in a way similar to marble. The material may have formed a cheaper substitute for marble, but it is likely that it was also valued for the range of colours which it permitted. The fragility of the medium is such that only a few insignificant fragments survived, until the spectacular discoveries at Kenchreai, the port of Corinth, in the mid-1960s. Excavations here by the Universities of Chicago and Indiana, in a complex tentatively identified as the Sanctuary of Isis, revealed a series of stacks of over one hundred panels of glass *opus sectile*. These were packed in crates, and evidently awaiting installation when the building was damaged by an earthquake and tidal wave, almost certainly that of AD 375, and abandoned. After an extremely difficult process of excavation and restoration, it was possible to recover a substantial number of the panels in reasonably complete form.⁴⁸

Many of the panels showed formal geometric designs, similar to those used in marble *opus sectile*. Nearly half had figured scenes; others had floral scrolls. The size varies, but most of the figured panels measure c.0.80–0.90 m by c.1.85–1.90 m; some were horizontal, others upright. The figure scenes fall into three groups. First, scenes of Nilotic flora and fauna: aquatic plants growing in two registers against a deep-blue background, water birds, animals including a crocodile, and a few putti. It is likely that these were intended to be set together to form a continuous frieze. The next group consists of marine panoramas: complex harbour scenes and cityscapes, with porticoes and other buildings along the shore, ships at sea, fish and fishers (figure 282). Finally there are upright panels with single large human figures. Two of these, badly damaged, appear to have belonged to the world of contemporary secular ceremonial, perhaps representing magistrates, but the others are great figures from classical literature, identified by name; there survive Homer, Plato (figure 283), and a very fragmentary Theophrastus.

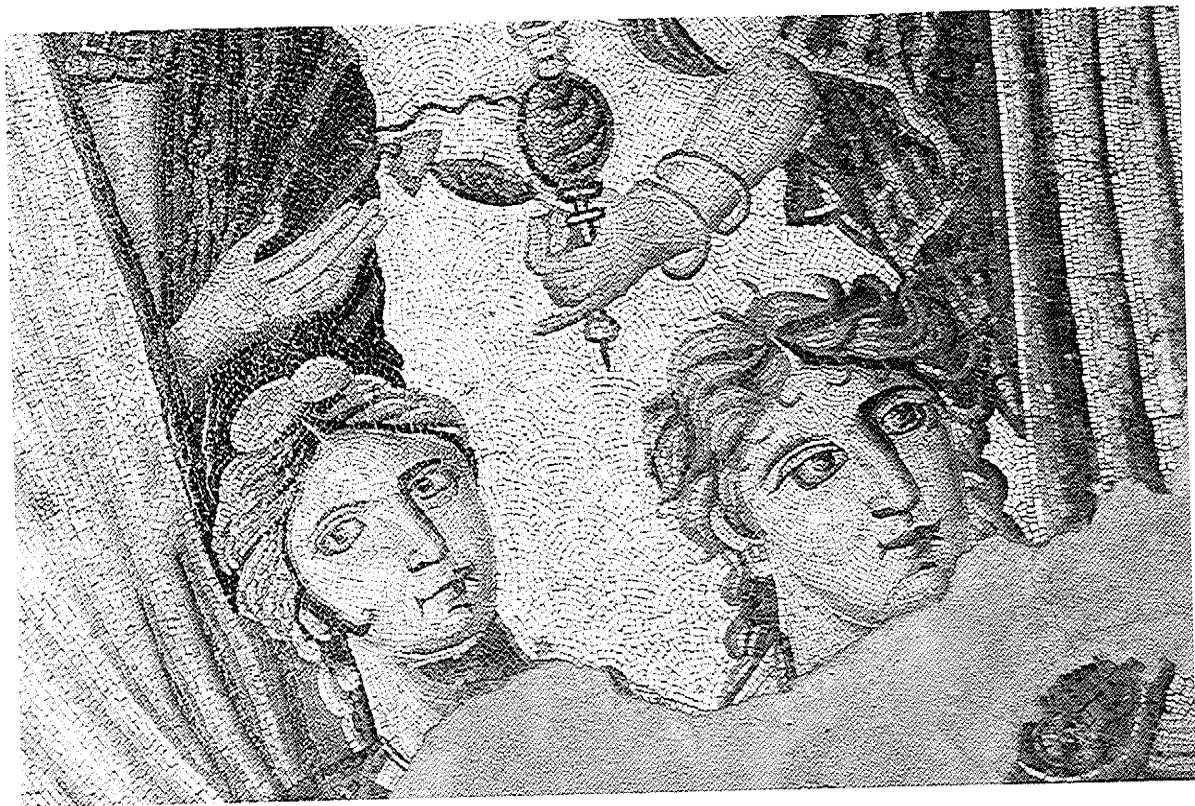
⁴⁸ L. Ibrahim, R. Scranton, R. Brill, *Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth II, The Panels of Opus Sectile in Glass* (Leiden 1976). For the building, and hypothetical identification as the Sanctuary of Isis mentioned by Pausanias (II.2.3), see R. Scranton, J. Shaw, L. Ibrahim, *Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth I, Topography and Architecture* (Leiden 1978), 53–78.



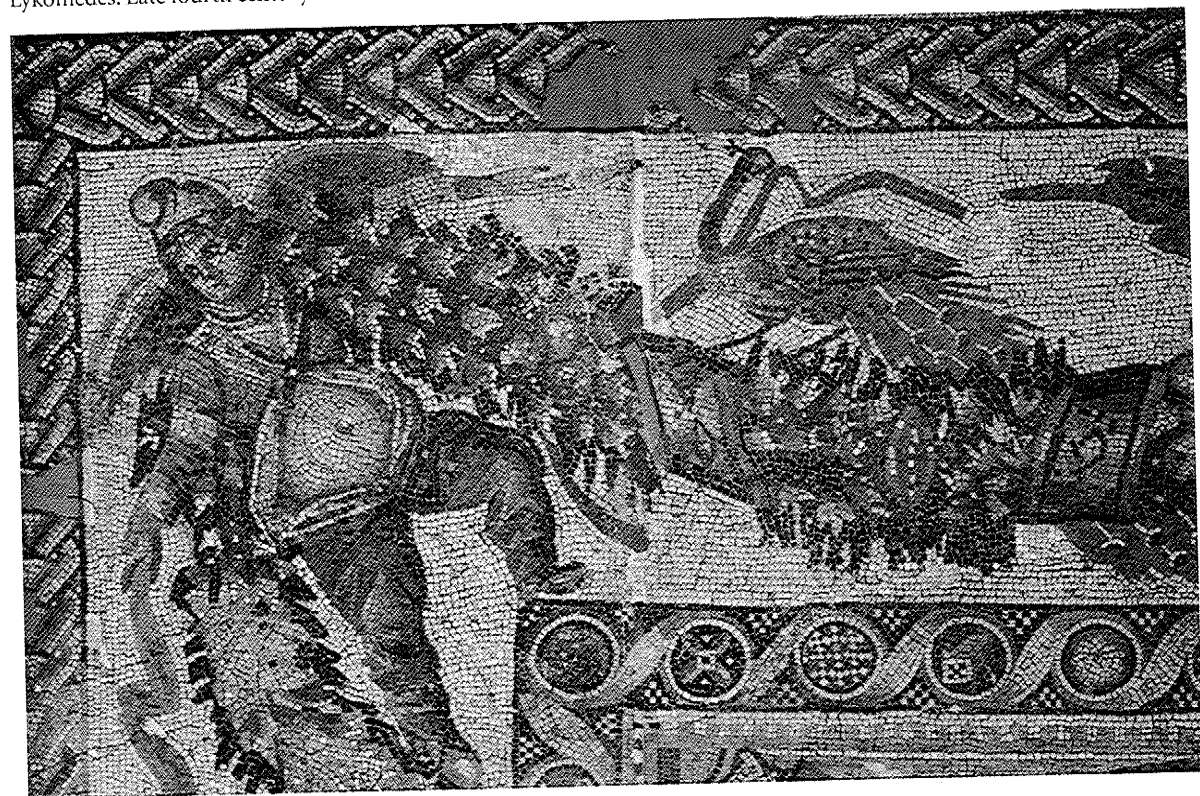
26 Pedrosa de la Vega, Villa de la Olmeda, room 4, geometric mosaic. Late fourth century AD.



27 Pedrosa de la Vega, Villa de la Olmeda, room 1, border of panel with Achilles on Skyros, detail. Late fourth century AD.



28 Pedrosa de la Vega, Villa de la Olmeda, room 1, Achilles on Skyros, detail with heads of Achilles and daughter of Lykomedes. Late fourth century AD.



29 Shahba-Philippopolis, mosaic of Artemis and Actaeon, detail of border. Souweida Museum. Mid-third century AD.

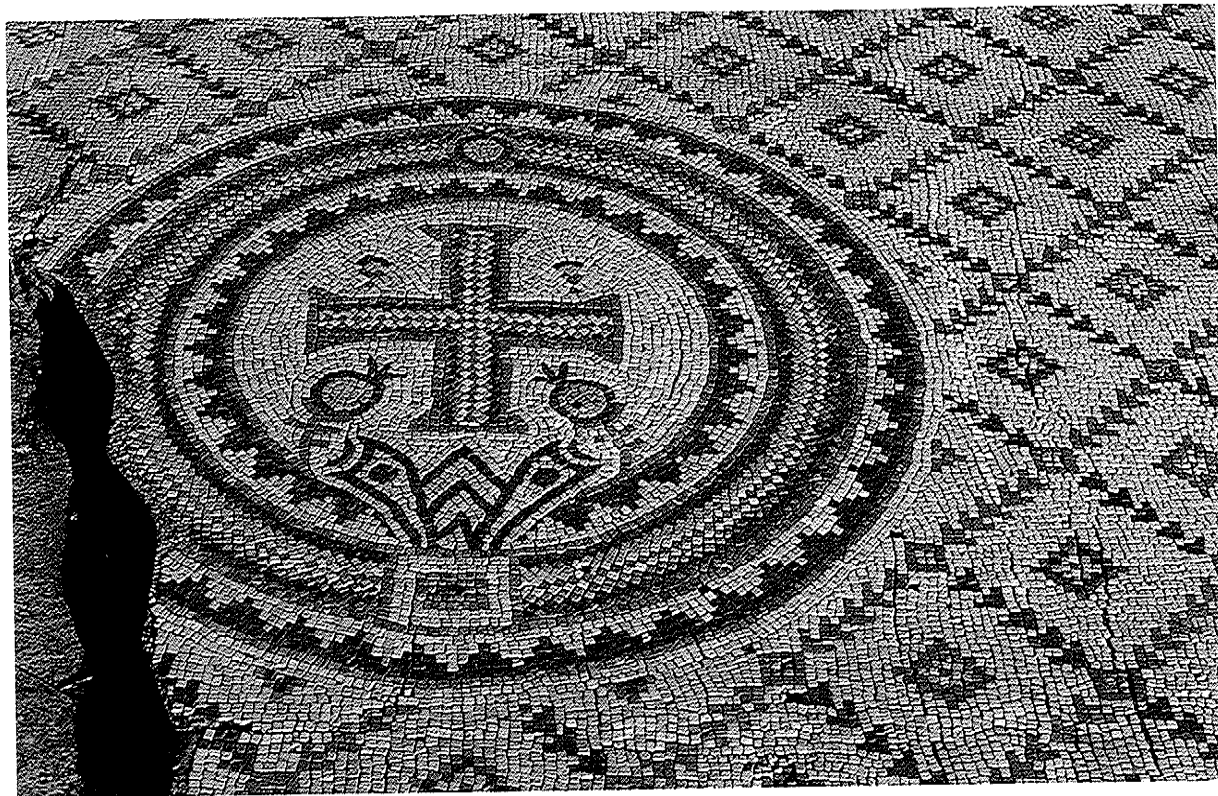


30 Antioch, mosaic of Green Carpet, detail. Byzantine Collection, Dumbarton Oaks. Fifth century AD.

below

31 Sepphoris, Dionysiac mosaic, detail showing Drunkenness of Heracles. First half of the third century AD.





32 Shavei Zion, church, detail of cross in north aisle. Probably early fifth century AD.



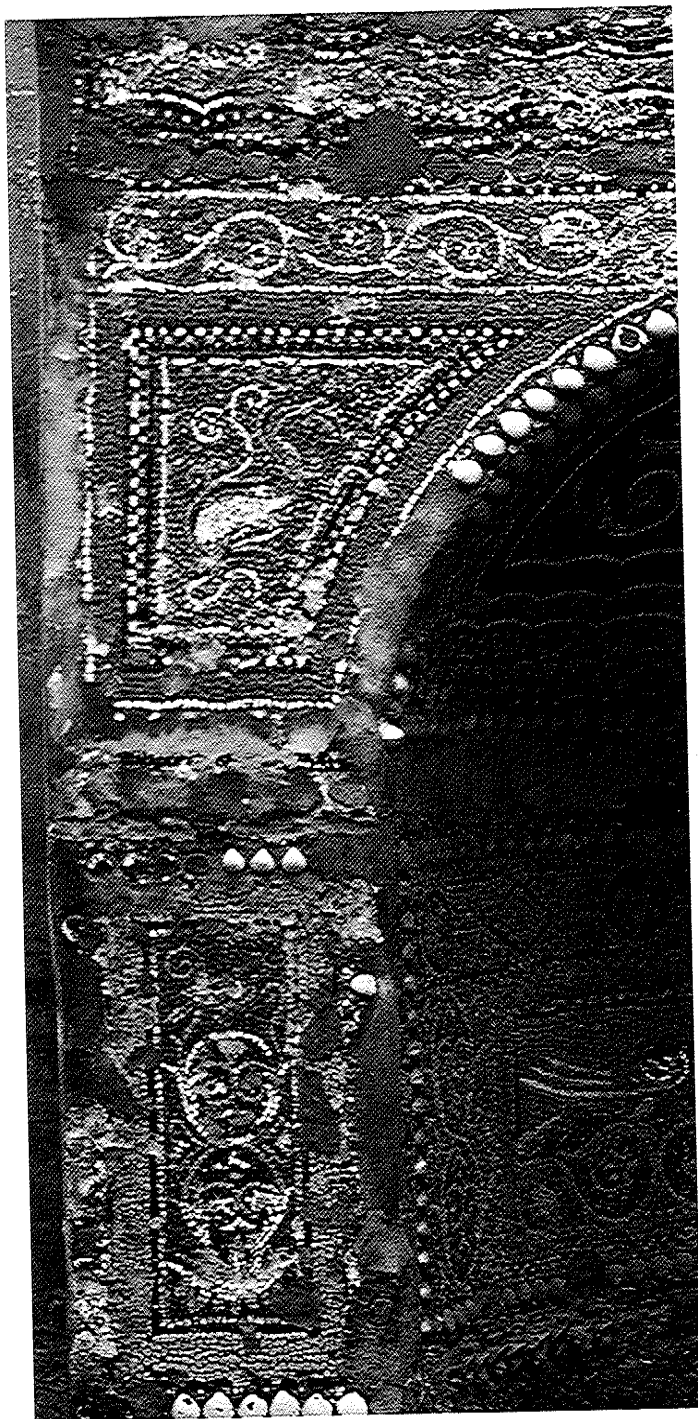
33 Madaba, Church of Map, detail of map of Holy Land, showing area around Jericho and river Jordan. Probably c. AD 560.



34 Hagios Taxiarchis, Mosaic of Seasons, panel with Winter. Archaeological Museum, Argos. 0.81 m × 1.05 m. Perhaps end of the fifth century AD.



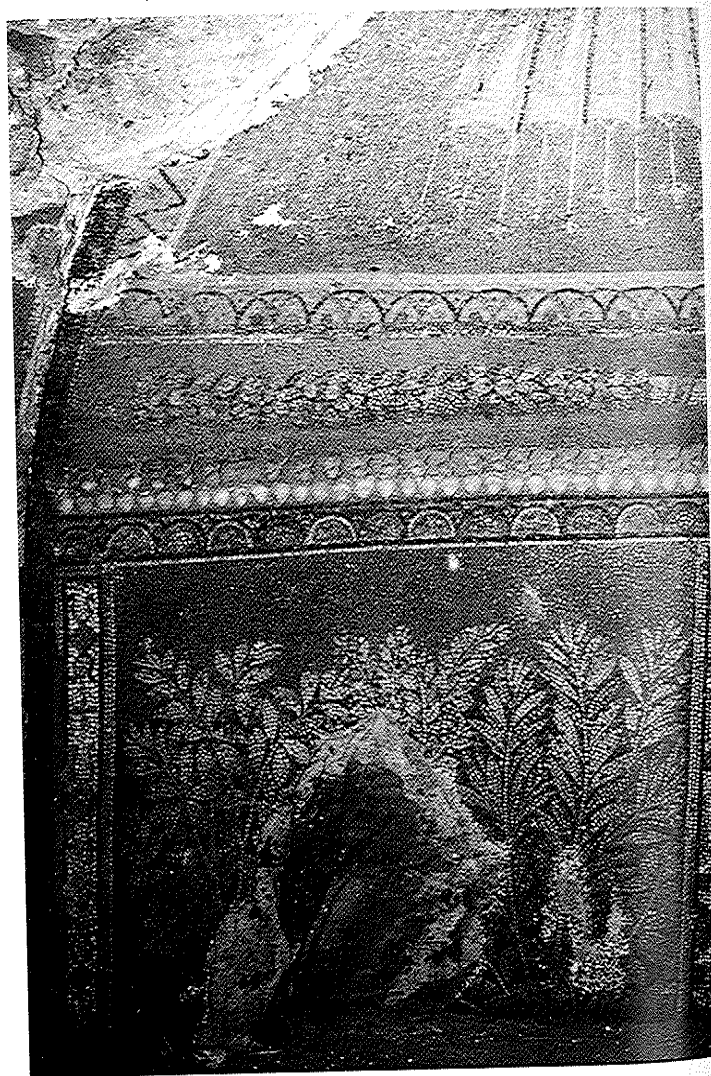
35 Nea Paphos, House of Aion, *triclinium*, Presentation of infant Dionysus. Panel c. 1.93 m. × 1.31 m. Second quarter of the fourth century AD.



36 Pompeii VI 8, 23, House of the Small Fountain, *aedicula*-fountain, detail. Probably AD 62-79.

below

37 Pompeii VI 17 (*Ins. Occ.*), 42, House of the Wedding of Alexander, fountain-*nymphaeum*, detail of apse and garden scene. Probably third quarter of the first century AD.



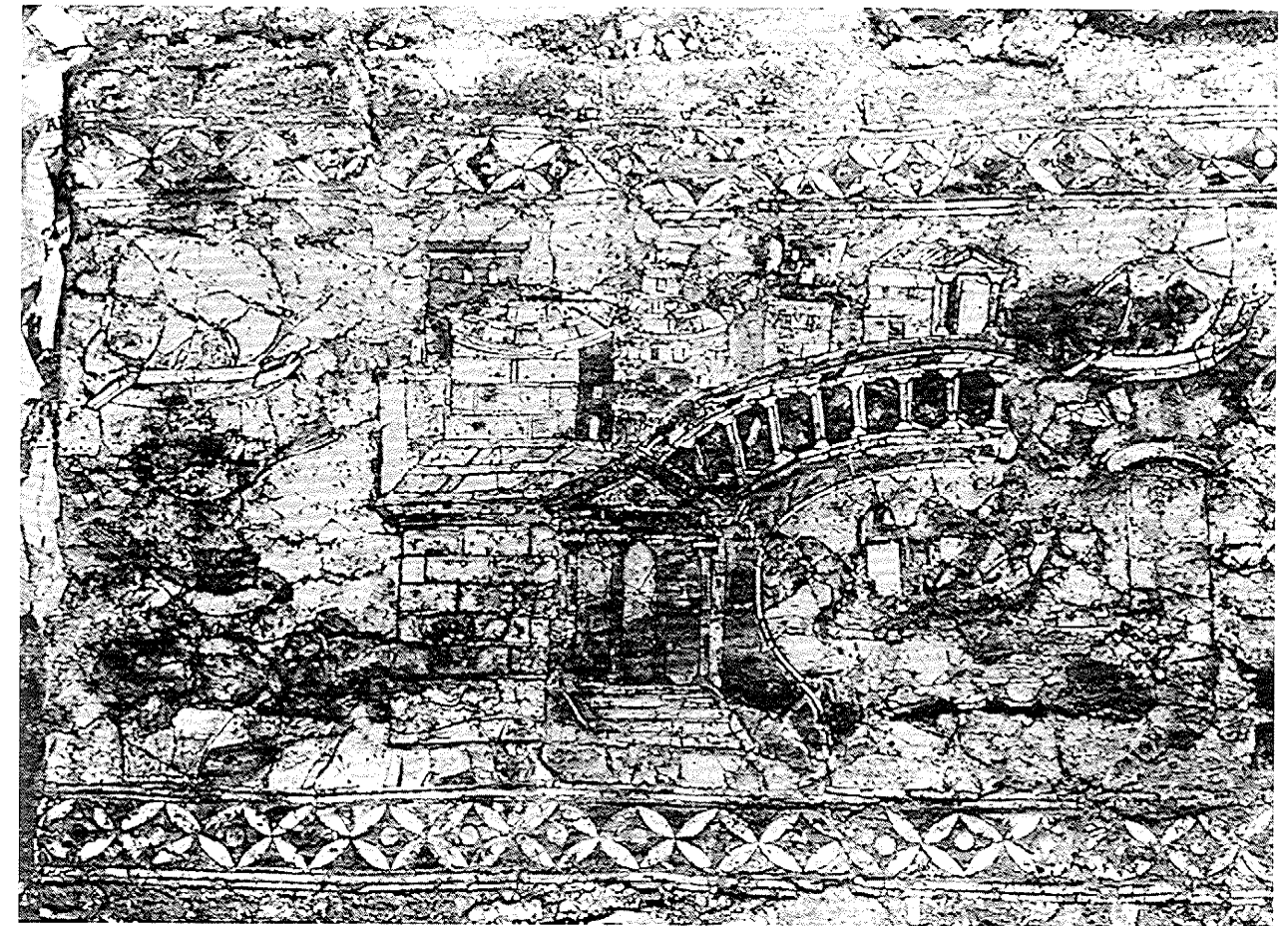
38 Rome, Basilica of Junius Bassus, *opus sectile* panel with Hylas and the Nymphs. Museo Nazionale, Rome. Width 1.20 m. Mid-fourth century AD.



39 Ostia, Building outside Porta Marina, hall with *opus sectile*, detail of frieze with floral scroll. Late fourth to early fifth century AD.



40 Ostia, Building outside Porta Marina, hall with *opus sectile*, panel with lion attacking stag. 2.10 m × 1.20 m. Late fourth to early fifth century AD.



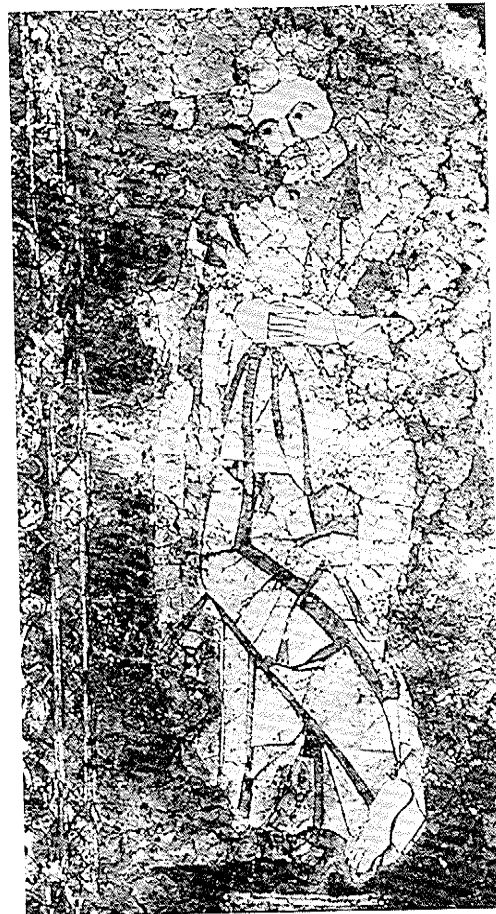
282 Kenchreai, glass *opus sectile* panel with harbour scene. 1.86 m × 0.82 m. c. AD 375.

The technique is a combination of that of marble *opus sectile* and of methods more specific to the production of glass. The pieces were set in a layer of pine resin and pulverised marble, supported on a bedding of amphora sherds, whose function here is manifestly to provide stability for the panels in transport. It is equally clear that they must have been set by the reverse method. The greater part of the design is built up of pieces cut from large, thin sheets of glass. Plato's folded hands, for instance, use a long triangle for each finger, larger pieces for hand, wrist, and forearm. Rods of glass, straight and curved, are used for the finest details, around the eyes or for worm-like threads in the hair. In the complex harbour scenes thin slivers form columns or roof-tiles, while rods are used in the steps or to render strips of mortar in the masonry. Some processes used are peculiar to glass. The background may have been set in place in a soft pasty state, while complex techniques are used for special effects. The brightly coloured fish and birds are formed from pieces fitted onto a matrix and fused with it, while mottled, striated and variegated effects in the individual glass pieces (such as the fins and tails of the fish) are

obtained by manipulating the glass when soft. Such details, therefore, owe more to the long traditions of glass manufacture in the ancient world than to *opus sectile* as examined previously in this chapter.⁴⁹

The aesthetic principles are, once again, characteristic of late antiquity. The buildings in the marine panels adopt a multiplicity of viewpoints, without concern for traditional perspective; the Nilotic scenes are divided rigidly into two zones, without depth; scale is arbitrary. The human figures are two-dimensional, shading is impossible. They impress by their hieratic power, stressed by the repetitive patterns of drapery, and by the broad features with large intense eyes. The colours, much altered by the elements, are almost impossible to appreciate; but the effect when new must have been dazzling, with brilliant greens, turquoise and blue, juxtaposed and contrasting with yellows, reds, and purple. The glass was not, of course, designed to be illuminated by light from behind like mediaeval stained glass; set against a wall, it would be the shiny surface which would command attention.

⁴⁹ For details of the techniques, see Ibrahim *et al. ibid.*, 16–29; Brill, *ibid.*, 228.



283 Kenchreai, glass *opus sectile* panel with Plato. 0.87 m × 1.78 m. c. AD 375.

⁵⁰ In Ibrahim *et al. ibid.*, 261.

Scranton has suggested that the panels may have been intended to line the passage leading to the area named the Fountain Court where they were stored.⁵⁰ Where they were made is harder to establish; they had clearly been imported to Kenchreai from a distance. Egypt has been tentatively proposed, on the grounds of the continuing importance of that country as a centre for the manufacture of glass, and the possible identification of the building as the sanctuary of Isis. But there are no certain Egyptian associations; Nilotic scenes by this date were widespread in Roman art and had lost all real connection with their original location. Analysis of the glass has been shown to permit an Egyptian origin but not to prove it. Regardless of their origin the panels, preserved by extraordinary chance, must be seen as a rare testimony to the diversity of production in the later Roman Empire, in which complex and elaborate forms of decoration flourished that are virtually unknown to us.

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Craftsmen and workshops

I

Our knowledge of most craftsmen and artisans in antiquity is limited; we have little clear information about those who made the mosaics, either as individuals or as a group in society. Most ancient writers were notoriously lacking in interest in the activities of craftsmen, as of manual workers in general, and have left us little account of their conditions of life and work. The distinction that might be made today between the 'high arts' and the applied arts or crafts did not exist in antiquity, where the same words, *techne* in Greek and *ars* in Latin, were applied to both; and all those who earned their living with their hands tended to be lumped together by the predominantly upper-class writers as an inferior category of society. It is true, of course, that a certain number of artists, principally (though not exclusively) painters and sculptors, achieved lasting fame. The great names, especially from the Classical and early Hellenistic periods, were familiar to anyone of education: artists such as Pheidias and Polykleitos in sculpture, Zeuxis or Apelles in painting. Moreover the names and brief accounts of the careers of many minor artists are preserved in the encyclopaedic *Natural History* of the elder Pliny, written in the third quarter of the first century AD, which draws on earlier writers on the history of art. Even Pliny, however, has little interest in artists closer to his own day, and there is still less in other Roman writers. For most of the period with which this book is concerned those whom we would today classify as artists tend, like the practitioners of other crafts, to be anonymous.

Moreover the character of mosaic work was such that even by modern standards it might seem more appropriate to classify it along with the more practical crafts, and its makers, however skilled, as craftsmen and decorators. A mosaic is almost always tied to the building where it is laid, and closely connected to its architectural form and purpose. Floor mosaics in addition serve a practical function, their first requirement being that they provide a smooth surface to be walked on. The fine *emblemata* of

the Hellenistic period to some extent form an exception, since they could be manufactured separately in the artists' studios; but in general mosaics are inextricably tied to their setting and their function. They belong in a category of work which was typically exercised in antiquity in workshops which might be as small as a single master-craftsman with his son or apprentice, and a slave or assistant for the less skilled work; larger establishments might be operated by a contractor with a number of subordinates, servile or free.¹

The direct evidence for mosaicists is very small. There is one mention in Pliny, discussed below, and a few other references in the literary sources, mostly not very informative. A handful of inscriptions on stone, funerary, votive or the like, mention mosaicists. Otherwise we are dependent on what can be deduced from the works themselves, both explicitly from inscriptions upon them, and implicitly from their general character. This chapter will consider, first, the scattered literary references to mosaicists, and then the evidence of inscriptions and signatures upon the mosaics, together with other occasional mentions in written sources. Deductions based on the works themselves are discussed in the following chapters. For the most part the craftsmen are anonymous; the few exceptions cast only a very limited light. There must have been considerable variation in their organisation, training, and practice over the more than millennial period covered in this survey, and within the vast area of the Roman Empire with its different cultures and traditions, but it is particularly difficult to make such differentiations. There are further problems in distinguishing between the makers of wall and floor mosaics, and between those who made other types of pavements; we are certain neither of the extent to which

¹ For crafts in general see I. Calabi Limentani, *Studi sulla società romana. Il lavoro artistico* (Milan-Varese 1958); A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (London 1972); J.-P. Sordini, 'L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne', *Ktèma* 4, 1979, 71–119; F. Coarelli ed., *Artisti e artigiani in Grecia. Guida storica e critica* (Rome-Bari 1980). Note that 'workshop' is used here, like the French *atelier*, to refer to a group of workmen; it does not, of course, imply a fixed location for their activities.

distinct specialities existed, nor of the correct application of different terms which appear in the sources.²

We have only one indication of an individual mosaicist whose work achieved posthumous fame, and he belongs, inevitably, to the Hellenistic period. In a famous passage discussed in chapter 2, Pliny describes the *asarotos oikos* or 'unswept floor' and the Drinking Doves of Sosos of Pergamon, whom he calls 'most famous in this genre' (*H.N.*36.184). Sosos may safely be placed in the first half or middle of the second century BC, the great period of Pergamene art; the fame of his work is attested by the numerous copies, though characteristically these are mostly free variations rather than direct reproductions.³ What Pliny admired in his work was its extreme realism, the *trompe l'œil* effects of the unswept floor (and probably the boldness of the conception), and the virtuosity of the portrayal of the dove admiring its reflection. Sosos is the only mosaicist mentioned by name by Pliny or any other ancient writer. In general there is little indication that mosaicists were deemed worthy to be ranked alongside famous artists of the calibre of those who occupy Pliny's long lists of painters and sculptors, or the occasional gem-cutter or master silversmith recorded in literature. The subsequent chapters in Pliny (*H.N.*36.184–9) give a brief (and often obscure) history of mosaics and other forms of pavement, and directions for making some of the more practical varieties, but show no interest in their makers.⁴

When mosaics are mentioned in other literary sources it is usually in a generic way, without reference to their individual qualities, still less to their makers. Mosaics caught the eye of a number of writers as an example of luxury, especially in the decoration of private dwellings; others noted the elaborate process of fitting together the tesserae to make an image, and used it as a comparison for

other activities such as the art of rhetoric.⁵ Very rarely is there anything more specific which would cast light on the mosaicists or the nature of their work. Vitruvius, in his handbook on architecture (7.1), gives practical directives for the laying of various types of pavements as part of an architect's job; these will be discussed in the next chapter.⁶ Much later, in the late fourth century AD, a tantalising reference in a letter of the statesman and orator Symmachus asks a correspondent for a sample of a 'new form' of mosaic that he has invented, but gives no details of its nature.⁷

II

The anonymity of the craftsmen is sometimes broken by the occasional practice among mosaicists of signing their work. Approximately seventy to eighty signatures are preserved on the mosaics themselves.⁸ These are spread over almost the whole chronological span covered in this book, from Greek pebble mosaics of the fourth century BC to the pavements of Christian churches in the Near East in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. The geographical distribution is equally wide, with examples from almost every area from which mosaics are known, though the practice of signing is more common in some regions than others. The nature and quality of the works on which signatures are found is equally varied, ranging from some (though by no means all) of the finest Hellenistic picture-mosaics to some very commonplace floors with simple ornamental designs. Names are never repeated on more than one mosaic, except within a single house or on obvious pendants, and on two sixth- to seventh-century synagogues in Palestine.⁹ There is there-

vaults. His correspondent is of course a fellow-aristocrat, not the mosaicist.

⁸ Donderer, *Mosaizisten*, lists ninety-two certain examples and nine possibles, including those known from inscriptions on materials other than mosaic: not all his 'certain' examples seem to me convincing. He excludes many names which have previously been identified as mosaicists (e.g. many of those listed in *Mosaico e Mosaicisti nell'antichità* (extract from *EAA*, Rome 1967)), where there has been confusion especially between the patron or dedicant and the craftsman: a few of these in my opinion should be considered possibles. Donderer does not always give adequate support for the dates he assigns the mosaics, some of which need to be treated with caution. For a review of Donderer, see Ph. Bruneau, *Gnomon* 1993, 533–6.

⁹ Apart from the two *emblemata* signed by Dioskourides (which clearly form a pair), two mosaics of the same house at Uthina (Oudna) in Africa Proconsularis both bore the signature *Industri*

fore no possibility of using the signatures to identify the characteristic hand or style of any individual or workshop, in the way that has been done with other crafts in antiquity. They represent only an infinitesimal proportion of the total number of mosaics; at no time nor place was it normal for mosaicists to sign their works. The reasons which led them to do so are usually obscure to us; nor can we assume that the same reasons operated at all periods and in different circumstances.¹⁰

Most of the signatures consist of nothing more than the name of the craftsman (or sometimes of more than one), followed by a verb meaning 'made [this]'; in Greek or Latin: for example *Sophilos epoiei* at Thmuis in Hellenistic Egypt, *Monnus fecit* on a third-century AD mosaic at Trier in Germany.¹¹ Others give only the name, either in the nominative or genitive. In Latin inscriptions the latter is evidently an abbreviation for another common formula, *ex officina* ('from the workshop (of)'), followed by a genitive. Only a few use more detailed formulae, which are sometimes more informative.¹²

The earliest signatures we possess appear on two pebble mosaics of the late fourth century BC, one fragmentary (and rather undistinguished) from Athens, the other the Stag Hunt signed *Gnosis epoiesen* at Pella, one of the masterpieces of the technique¹³ (figure 12). After these we have a small number of signed mosaics from the Hellenistic period, almost all of exceptionally high quality. They include the mosaic with a personification from Thmuis signed by Sophilos (figure 25); one of the mosaics of the Palace at Pergamon with the signature of Hephaestion on a *trompe l'œil* piece of parchment (figure 29); the mosaic of the dolphins in the House of the

Dolphins at Delos signed by [Askle]piades of Arados (figure 36); and the two *emblemata* signed by Dioskourides of Samos at Pompeii (figures 44, 45).¹⁴ These are 'picture-mosaics' which aim to rival in stone the effects of painting, and their makers must have ranked among the finest craftsmen of their day. It looks as though at this period a signature imparted a certain cachet, identifying the mosaic as the work of a currently prestigious artist and advertising his skill. By no means all works of high quality are signed at this period, however; there is no signature on the Alexander mosaic, nor on any of the other remaining *emblemata* that were so highly prized by the wealthy homeowners of the late Republic.

There are very few signatures on mosaics of the late Republic or early Empire, and indeed few overall in Italy. Occasional examples show the continuation there of the Hellenistic tradition, for instance with the Heraklitos who signed, in Greek, the version of the *asarotos oikos* in Rome, now in the Vatican Museums, which probably dates from the second century AD.¹⁵ It should be noted that the signature here in no way implies a claim by the artist to the original invention of the theme, in the modern sense; any educated observer would have recognised the allusion to the work of Sosos. Heraklitos claims credit probably for the ingenious composition of the whole, in which Sosos' conceit is combined with a row of theatrical masks, a Nilotic frieze, and a now-missing central panel, and certainly for the very fine execution. It is characteristic of the Roman attitude towards art that works in other media too are sometimes signed by those who in modern parlance would be considered copyists;

(Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 94, A63). The synagogues at Beth Alpha and Beth Shean are both signed as the work of Marianos and his son Aninas; these may be the same men, or successive generations of the same family (below, n.41).

¹⁰ For signatures from the Iberian provinces cf. J. Gómez Pallarès, 'Nombres de artistas en inscripciones musivas latinas e ibéricas de Hispania', *Epigraphica* 53, 1991, 59–96; J. Lancha, 'Les mosaïstes dans la vie économique de la Péninsule Ibérique du Ier au IVe s.: état de la question et quelques hypothèses', *MCV* 20, 1984, 45–61; for Greek signatures, P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με τους τύπους υπογραφής καλλιτεχνών και τεχνιτών στην παλαιοχριστιανική εποχή συγκριτικά με τη ελληνική και τη ρωμαϊκή αρχαιότητα', in Αμης. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Καθηγητή Μανώλη Ανδρόνικο 1 (Thessaloniki 1987), 89–99. For general questions of signatures in antiquity, see G. Siebert, 'Signatures d'artistes, d'artisans et de fabricants dans l'Antiquité classique', *Klèma* 3, 1978, 111–31.

¹¹ Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 79, A39: Σωφίλος ἐποίηι (above, ch.2, n.21); 99, A74: *Monnus fecit*.

¹² For more specialised verbs such as ψηφοθεῖν and *tessellare* see Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 15–32. Given the smallness of the sample and the number of doubtful cases, I am not convinced by his argument that these terms are always reserved for the dedicants. For the general problem of distinguishing between patron or dedicant and craftsman, see Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, 'Παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με τους τύπους' (cit.n.10); also Balmelle, Darmon 235–6; Bruneau, 'Philologie mosaïstique' (cit.n.5), 33. Greek signatures in the genitive probably understand a word such as ἔργον, 'the work (of)'.

¹³ Γνώσις ἐποίησεν: above, ch.1, n.25; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 58, A9. Athens: *ibid.* 80, A41.

¹⁴ Above, ch.2, ns.21, 32, 43; ch.3, n.27; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 56, A6; 59, A11; 64, A17; 79, A39.

¹⁵ Ἡράκλιτος ἡργάσατο: above, ch.2, n.27; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 63, A16. For arguments for an earlier date (mid-first century AD) see M. de Vos, *L'Egitomania in pittura e mosaici romano-campani della prima età imperiale* (Leiden 1980), 29–32.

² See below, ns.28–30, 39; above, ch.14, n.1, for the problem of distinguishing the terms for wall and floor mosaics. Even more problematic are other terms such as *pavimentarius* or *vermiculator* which are found in inscriptions; see Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 25–6, 31–2, with refs.

³ Above, ch. 2, ns.26–9.

⁴ For these much discussed chapters, see the commentary of A. Rouveret in the Budé edition of Plin. *H.N.*36 (ed. J. André, 1981); M. Donderer, 'Die antiken Pavimenttypen und ihre Benennungen', *JdI* 102, 1987, 365–77, with full refs.

⁵ For examples and references, see my paper, 'Mosaics and their public', forthcoming in the proceedings of the VIIe Colloque international sur la mosaïque antique, Tunis 1994; also Ph. Bruneau, 'Philologie mosaïstique', *JdS* 1988, 3–73, esp.60–6.

⁶ Ch.17, section 11.

⁷ Symm. *Ep.*8.42 (41) Seeck, referring to mosaic to be used to decorate



284 Mascula, geometric mosaic with signature of workshop of Iunior. Probably fourth century AD.

what was admired was precisely the skill in reproducing, and often varying or adapting, well-known originals.¹⁶

Emblemata and fine Hellenistic mosaics of the type just discussed were prized luxury items, whose makers might well pride themselves on their individual products. Under the Empire, and especially in the west, mosaic production was a large-scale business. Rather than the individual virtuoso piece, the overall decorative programme of room or building became important. The principal groups of signatures from the later Empire seem to reflect this changed character. They are found more frequently in the North African and Hispanic provinces from the late second or third century onwards; in both regions the formula *ex officina* ('from the workshop (of)') followed by a name in the genitive appears, while the abbreviated form with the name in the genitive alone is found in North Africa. Comparable formulae are used on products such as lamps; the overt stress on the workshop emphasises the communal production of the overall work, rather than the skill of the individual craftsman. Some of these signatures occur on mosaics that are ambitious in conception, such as a scene of the finding of Ariadne at Emerita (Mérida) in Spain, signed *ex officina Anniponi* (figure 163). To the modern eye this presents a remarkable example of the dissolution of classical figure-style, but for

the craftsman who executed it, perhaps in the fifth century, it may have made a proud assertion of his ability to master traditional subject-matter.¹⁷ But others are found on very commonplace floors, where they may simply be inserted into any convenient place in the design. At Mascula (Khenchela) in Numidia, for instance, *ex officine Iunioris* appears in a roundel in a run-of-the-mill geometric pattern covering a portico of the peristyle¹⁸ (figure 284). A workshop responsible for an extensive programme of decoration – an entire house, or a major part thereof – might presumably leave its trademark at any spot that was convenient.

Such signatures may be taken to constitute an advertisement for the products of the workshop concerned. The emulatory element is well illustrated by the mosaics of the late fourth-century villa at Carranque in Spain, discussed in chapter 9. The activity of two different workshops is attested here both by the style of the mosaics in different parts of the building, and by two separate workshop signatures that accompany them. A damaged signature at the entrance to the *triclinium* with a scene of Achilles and Briseis identifies it as the product of the workshop of (probably) Iulius Prudens. A longer inscription accompanies the mosaic with metamorphosis scenes in the *cubiculum*. To the name of the workshop owner (Ma. . . .nus) it adds that of a second craftsman, Hirinius, who is described as having 'painted' it, as well as a wish for felicity to Maternus, evidently the owner of the villa.¹⁹ The excavator claims that the two sets of mosaics belong to a single phase; although there is at present no firm archaeological evidence, it seems unlikely that any substantial portion of the villa was left for long without its pavement, and we may guess that no great gap in time separates them. Two rival workshops, then, appear to have set their stamp each on its own products, where visitors could see, admire, and – hopefully – think of engaging their creators. In a country villa the mosaicists had to be brought in from the towns, possibly at some distance, and the patrons could exercise a choice between different centres; the incentive for the

workshops to advertise their work was correspondingly stronger.

In the east, especially in Greece, signatures occur occasionally from (probably) the second century AD onwards, without falling into any clear pattern. They become much more common on the floors of Christian churches (and, presumably in imitation, on those of a couple of Jewish synagogues) of the early Byzantine period, from the fifth century till the seventh and eighth, in Palestine, Transjordan, and Syria. These often consist of more than one name, the mosaicists evidently working as a team. Their presence is part of a widespread liking for inscriptions on mosaics that is characteristic of this period generally, but especially common in ecclesiastical buildings; other inscriptions record numerous aspects of the construction and decoration of the churches, often with dates, the names of the bishops and priests responsible, or of the lay donors who contributed. A new incentive had evidently entered: the desire to leave a lasting record of piety where it could be read by both God and men. In a number of cases, the signature forms part of a prayer for the salvation of the mosaicist(s). For instance in the baptistery of the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, near Madaba in Jordan, an inscription calls on the Lord to remember the mosaicists Soelos, Kaioumas and Elias and all their household.²⁰ Where the names are as prominent as this the desire of the craftsmen to advertise their work may be present, as well as piety. But another formula sometimes found (and paralleled on some inscriptions recording donors) shows that even the names could be suppressed in aspiration for a heavenly reward: 'Lord, remember thy servants the mosaicists whose names thou knowest' runs an inscription in the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (Umm al-Rasas).²¹

III

Only sporadic information can be derived from the signatures and other scattered pieces of evidence about the social standing of the mosaicists or their geographic, ethnic or linguistic origins; the material is insufficient for any systematic survey, and statistics are obviously meaningless. The signatures on Hellenistic mosaics usually give very little except the name, but occasionally also add the mosaicist's place of origin: Dioskourides from the island of Samos, [Askle]piades at Delos from Arados in Phoenicia. Dioskourides' *emblemata*, though found in Pompeii, might have been imported there ready made; we cannot tell where he actually worked. The declaration of his Greek origin, which is only to be expected around 100 BC for works of this quality, doubtless enhanced their value in the eyes of the Italian purchaser as a guarantee of culture. The Phoenician origin of [Askle]piades is also not surprising in the cosmopolitan society of late Hellenistic Delos; the presence in the same house of a pavement showing the Sign of Tanit suggests that the owner too may have been a Phoenician.²² A fragmentary Hellenistic mosaic recently found at Segesta in Sicily bears the signature of Dionysios son of Herakleides from Alexandria: the first attestation known of an Alexandrian mosaicist working outside Egypt, and clearly a reflection of the prestige of Alexandrian craftsmen.²³

In the Imperial period the names are a heterogeneous lot, which only rarely give reliable indication of origin. The phenomenon of itinerant mosaicists – master-craftsmen going from job to job, or establishing workshops in new centres and training local pupils – has often been invoked to account for the spread of mosaics, though there is very little hard evidence. Names of Greek form

¹⁶ The *emblemata* signed by Dioskourides must also be copies of well-known originals, almost certainly paintings; see below, ch.18, section iv. It is sometimes suggested that Dioskourides was the name of the original painter, but this is most unlikely. With very rare exceptions, signatures on Roman works (in any medium) give the names of those who produced the signed work itself, not a earlier model on which it was based.

¹⁷ Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 84, 147; Gómez Pallarès, 'Nombres de artistas' (cit.n.10), 76–8; above, ch.9, n.43.

¹⁸ Donderer, *ibid.* 95, 166; J. Lassus, *RecConst* 71, 1969–71, 45–55 and pls. Other examples of the *ex officina* formula, Donderer, *ibid.* 23–4.

¹⁹ *Ex officina Iulii Prui* . . . : Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 94, 164; *ex officina Ma* . . . / *pingit Hirinius / utere felix Maternus / hunc cubiculum*: *ibid.* 96, 168. See above, ch.9, ns.38–40; D. Fernández-Galiano, 'The villa of Maternus at Carranque', *CMGR* v, 199–210; Gómez Pallarès, 'Nombres de artistas' (cit.n.10), 70–3. For *pingit* and similar terms, below, ns.43–4.

²⁰ Κ(ύρι)ε μνήσθητι Σοέλου κ(αί) Καίουμου κ(αί) Ἡλίου ψηφοθήτων κ(αί) παντός τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῶν: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 78, 137; Piccirillo, *Madaba* 155–7; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 146, fig.183; the mosaic is dated to AD 530. For mosaicists' signatures in churches in Syria, see Donceel-Voûte 470–1.

²¹ Μνήσθητι Κ(ύρι)ε τοὺς δούλους σου τοὺς ψιφωθέντας οὓς γινώσκεις τὰ ὀνόματα: Piccirillo, *Madaba* 289; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 238, from the mosaics of the nave of the church. For these, and the question of the reliability of the date apparently reading AD 785, see above ch.11, n.35. The mosaics around the altar of the same church, dated AD 756, have an inscription with a prayer for (among others) the mosaicists, whose names are here given, Staurakios of Esbous, son of Zada, and Euremios his colleague: Piccirillo, *Madaba* 285–6; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 79, 138 (with a slightly different reading).

²² Above, ch.2, n.44.

²³ [Δ]ιονύσιος [Ἡ]ρακλείδου [Ἀ]λεξ[ανδρεὺς ἐ]πιτοίει: A. Pinna, *ASNP* 21.3–4, 1991, 906–8, pls.CLXXXIX, 1–2; CLXC, 2; G. Nenci, *ibid.* 916–17. Only small fragments remain apart from the signature, but the technique is clearly Hellenistic, using lead strips, some very small tesserae, and tesserae of terracotta; Sicilian parallels suggest the late second or early first century BC (Pinna, *ibid.* 908). The date in the early third century BC suggested by Nenci on the basis of the letter forms (an unreliable guide on mosaics) is impossibly early for a mosaic of this technique. He suggests further that this may be the same Dionysios son of Herakleides from Alexandria whom an inscription of Termessos (dated only broadly to the Hellenistic period) records to have gilded an object, presumably a statue (*TAM* 111.26; *SEG* vi 629); given the difference between the two crafts, this identification is not plausible. However it can surely be accepted that the Alexandria referred to is the city of Egypt, not any less famous homonym.

continue to appear on mosaics in the western, Latin-speaking parts of the empire; in view of the prestige of Greek craftsmanship this is natural, but does not necessarily indicate that their bearers themselves came from the Greek-speaking regions. However when the signatures are written in Greek, as with Heraklitos' *asarotos oikos* mosaic in Rome, such an origin is likely.²⁴ More revealing would be names of Latin form in the Greek-speaking regions, which would suggest that their bearers had received their formation in the west; but the suggested examples of this are uncertain.²⁵ A mosaic with hunting scenes at Lillebonne in northern Gaul, probably of the fourth century, contains an inscription recording the work of a certain T. Sen(nius) or Sex(tius) Felix, who identifies himself as coming from Puteoli in Italy, and (apparently) of his pupil Amor, who seems to be local. This looks like a classic example of a travelling mosaicist and local pupil, but the reading of the inscription is not certain, and Felix may in fact have been the dedicant, not the artist.²⁶

Inscriptions on funerary monuments sometimes contain more information than the signatures on mosaics. Direct evidence for a mosaicist who travelled is given by a funerary inscription from Perinthos in Thrace, dated to the first or second century AD. This records an old man of eighty, who exercised his art in many cities, and beat all mosaicists with his skill. He left a son named Proklos, his equal in skill, who was a member of his local *boule* (city council); the son presumably erected the stone to his father. Though the assertion of the 'many cities' is vague, and in an honorific inscription of this sort may be exaggerated, it is clear that the old man's activity was not confined to his home town. This inscription also gives us an unusually explicit glimpse of the social status which a

mosaicist could achieve: the son is a man of some standing in his home town.²⁷

A gravestone from Beneventum in Italy shows a mosaicist from the lower end of the social scale, whose father was a public slave of the colony. The young man, himself a slave named Hermas, was a wall mosaicist who fell to his death when working at a height.²⁸ Another wall mosaicist was an imperial freedman of the Emperor Tiberius; he achieved at least enough wealth to set up a grave monument in Rome for himself, his freedmen and freedwomen, and their descendants.²⁹ A group of four freedmen from one family who built a tomb for themselves near Rome in the mid-first century BC called themselves 'builders who made pavements' (*structor(es) paeimentari(i)*); the nature of the pavements is not specified.³⁰ A number of funerary inscriptions from various parts of the empire mention *tesserarii* or *tessellarii*, some of them slaves or freedmen, others freeborn citizens, but these cannot be taken necessarily to refer to mosaicists: the same term could be applied both to manufacturers of dice and to a junior military rank, explanations which in several instances are more likely.³¹

While funerary inscriptions frequently indicate the social and civic standing of the man or men honoured, either by the form of the name or by other means, such information was not considered necessary for a craftsman's signature. Most of the signatures on the mosaics, as has been seen, consist only of a single name, which may not reveal whether it is that of a freeborn citizen, a freedman, a man of peregrine (non-Roman) origin, or a slave. A few do give further details. Two or three signatures of slaves are identifiable: apart from Amor at Lillebonne (if correctly interpreted), a signature on a black-and-white

mosaic, probably of the second century AD, at Tyndaris in Sicily states clearly that it is the work of Neikias, slave of Dionysios.³² A few appear to give the formal nomenclature of a Roman citizen, the three names or *tria nomina*, but almost every case is questionable, like that of T. Sen(nius) or Sex(tius) Felix at Lillebonne. At Nea Paphos on Cyprus a mosaic showing Orpheus and the beasts contains an inscription along the top, giving in Greek the very Roman-looking name [Gai]us (or Titus) Pinnius Restitutus; but the prominent position makes this more likely to be the patron than the artist.³³ All that can be said of many of the other names is that a few look like the typical names of slaves or freedmen, but more have a form characteristic of free citizens, especially in the later Empire; such conclusions are far from reliable. Nor do they normally cast light on the ethnic background of the craftsmen, especially in the western empire where names of varied origin are freely mixed; none seem to be identifiable with certainty as indigenous to a specific region.³⁴

More revealing are some of the names that appear on the church mosaics of the early Byzantine period in the east. Names that are clearly Aramaic in form appear here alongside, and combined with, others that are traditional Greek (sometimes a Hellenised form of a Roman name), and yet others that are specifically Christian. Thus in the Memorial of Moses at Mount Nebo, the three craftsmen who sign in the baptistery are called Soelos, Kaioumas and Elias, while in the Church of St George at the neighbouring village of Nebo (Khirbet el-Mukhayyat) the signature names the mosaicists Naoumas, Kyriakos, and Thomas. In Madaba itself, the mosaic in the Church of the Apostles is signed by the mosaicist Salamanios³⁵ (figure 212). All are evidently local craftsmen, their names echoing many of those borne by priests and lay donors on other inscriptions of the same churches; the mixture of origins is characteristic of the society.

IV

Our information about the corporate status of mosaicists is even more lacunose. Artisans and craftsmen in the Roman world were usually organised within their cities into corporations, called *collegia* in Latin, which provided a social and religious identity as well as an economic one.³⁶ Our evidence for such associations comes mainly from inscriptions and the law codes, and deals for the most part with large, powerful groups such as builders and carpenters. Specialisation among ancient artisans was highly developed, and we would expect the mosaicists to have formed associations of their own, but only two possible records are known. An inscription from Rome, dated to AD 19, is dedicated to the Genius of the *collegium* of the *pavimentarii*: the word means 'makers of pavements', which may perhaps have included mosaicists.³⁷ Much later, at Didyma in Asia Minor in the early Byzantine period, the mosaicists were sufficiently conscious of their corporate identity to set up an inscription on marble, linking a wish for their good fortune to that of the city.³⁸

That the status of the mosaic workers was directly comparable to that of other artisans is clear from the Edict of the Emperor Diocletian of AD 301, which attempted to fix the maximum prices that could be paid for certain commodities and the wages of certain craftsmen. Mosaicists appear under two headings, the *musaearius*, who was to receive sixty *denarii* a day in addition to his board, and the *tessellarius*, who was to receive fifty. The distinction is usually taken to be between wall and floor mosaicists, but this is not necessarily correct; it may be between the maker of fine decorative mosaics and the maker of plain tessellated pavements. More instructive is the comparison with other crafts: a stonemason, carpenter, wagon-maker, blacksmith, or baker was to receive the same as the *tessellarius*, a marble-worker (which may have included the makers of *opus sectile*) and the shipwright who made sea-

²⁴ Above, n.15.

²⁵ For . . . [os Pinnios Restitutos (in Greek) at Nea Paphos, see below, n.33. Also doubtful is the Latin inscription, *Sempron(ius) [s]travit* recorded on a lost mosaic at Alexandria (*CIL* III 6614; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 107, 185). This has been taken as the mark of a Latin craftsman working in the Roman camp there (K. Parlasca, *CMGR* II, 368), but both the form of the name and the verb are unusual for signatures, and it more likely refers to the donor.

²⁶ Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 108–11, 186, giving a reading T. Sex(tius) Felix c(ivis) Puteolanus fec(it) / et Amor c(ivitatis) K(aletorum servus) discipulus. Amor would be the slave of the local tribe the Kaleti. The mosaic has been heavily restored, and the reading and interpretation are far from certain: see *RecGaulle* II.5, 90–102, no.885, pls.LXVII–LXXXIX. For doubts as to the identification as a signature, see also Balmelle, Darmon 237; Bruneau, 'Philologie mosaïstique' (cit.n.5), 33.

²⁷ [πολλὰς ἐν πόλιν τεχνὴν νεῖκεν πρόπαντας / ψιφοθέτας δὲ τοῖς Παλλάδος αὐξόμενος. νῖα λιπὼν βουλῆς σύνεδρον

Πρόκλον ἰσοτεχνόν μοι / ὀγδωκοντούτης / [. . .]: *CIG* II 2025; *SEG* xxvi 827; see also *BEP* 1972, 286a; 1977, 297. On another Perinthos inscription P. Aelius Harpocraton, surnamed Proklos, is honoured by the *boule* and *demos* for decorating the sanctuary of Tyche, and had a statue erected to him by the Alexandrian businessmen in Perinthos (*CIG* II 2024). It has sometimes been assumed that this is the same man as the Proklos of *CIG* II 2025, but there is no basis for this assumption. Cf. Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 73–5, 132, 33.

²⁸ *CIL* IX 6281 = *ILS* 7671: . . . dum varias cupit spec[ies] / museo figure in alto / decidit et Hermas hoc nunc / est pondere clausus . . .; erected by his father Carpus, *coloniae* (servus). Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 92–3, 161.

²⁹ *CIL* VI 9647 = *ILS* 7670: Ti. Iulius Aug. I. / Nicephor(us) museiar(ius) / fecit sibi et / libertis libertabusque suis / posterisque eorum; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 94–5, 165; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 405–6.

³⁰ Grave inscription of four freedmen named P. Maneilius, from Pantanelle on the Via Latina: *AE* 1979, 129; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 97, 170.

³¹ Cf. Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 119–22, 85–8; 132, C11.

³² Lillebonne: above, n.26. Tyndaris: Νεϊκίας Διονυσίου δοῦλος ἐποίη; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 71, 128; above, ch.8, n.3.

³³ [. . .]ος Πίννιος 'Ρεσπιτοῦτος ἐποίη; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 73, 131 (who accepts it as a signature, unlikely in my view); above, ch.13, n.21. See also the mosaic of T. Flavius Bassus and Hermes at Trikala in Thessaly, below, n.45.

³⁴ See the conclusions of Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 47–9.

³⁵ Memorial of Moses: above, n.20. Church of St George, Nebo: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 70, 127; Piccirillo, *Madaba* 181; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 178. Church of Apostles, Madaba: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 76, 135; Piccirillo, *Madaba* 105; Piccirillo, *Jordan* 106; above, ch.11, n.27.

³⁶ Cf. H. Pavis d'Escurac, 'Dénominations des organisations artisanales dans l'Occident romain', *Kièma* 15, 1990, 109–20; Sodini, 'L'artisanat urbain' (cit.n.1), 100–19; Burford, *Craftsmen* (cit.n.1), 160–3.

³⁷ *CIL* VI 243: *genio collegi pavimentariorum M. Alfius Onesimus dedicavit*. Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 26, 82, 145, thinks the term should be confined to the makers of mortar pavements with inclusions of chips or tesserae; but since *pavimenta* is certainly used of mosaics, the term may have had a wider reference.

³⁸ Νικᾶ ἡ τύχη τῆς πόλεως καὶ ψιφωπῶν: A. Rehm, *Die Inschriften, Didyma* II (ed. T. Wiegand, Berlin 1958), 318, no.613, sixth to seventh century; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 82, 144.

going vessels the same as the *musciarius*. Painters were better paid: the wall-painter was to receive seventy *denarii* per day, the *pictor imaginarius* or painter of images one hundred and fifty, the highest sum listed.³⁹

Slightly later, in AD 337, the emperor Constantine also included mosaicists (*musivarii* and *tessellarii*) along with numerous other craftsmen including architects, doctors, sculptors, painters, goldsmiths, carpenters, and many others, in an edict exempting them from compulsory public service, in order to permit them to perfect their art and train their sons in it.⁴⁰ This presents a picture of small family workshops which is very much what we would expect; it fits the references to a son succeeding to his father, like the inscription of the old man at Perinthos, or the signatures that show father and son working together.⁴¹

V

A few of the signatures (none of them earlier than the third century AD) cast a little light on the organisation of the work within the workshops, a subject which has to be considered in combination with the technical evidence of the mosaics themselves discussed in the next chapter. When there is only one signature we assume it to be that of the master-craftsman or head of the workshop, with an unknown number of assistants or apprentices. But when more than one signature appears it is natural to ask whether they worked together on an equal basis, or whether there was some division of labour, either between supervisor and subordinates, or between those exercising different specialities. Sometimes there is

indeed an indication that the men named have been responsible for different tasks, though the interpretation of these is usually difficult. The clearest signs are given by one of the mosaics from Carranque in Spain, discussed above, and by a signature on the mosaics of a building of the Christian period at Thebes in Greece. This last tells us that two men, Demetrios and Epiphane, made the mosaic: Demetrios thought out the drawing (*graphe*), Epiphane executed it. It adds that the priest Paulos was responsible for the work as a whole, that is, that he commissioned it⁴² (figure 285). The Carranque inscription specifies that Hirinius painted (*pingit*) the work, although the workshop belonged to someone named Ma...us.⁴³ A few other inscriptions refer to a *pictor* in Latin or *zographos* in Greek, terms which can mean either painter or draftsman; they show that such craftsmen played a recognised, though not necessarily indispensable part in the production of mosaics. The most remarkable is the signature of a man named Sabinianus Senurianus who repaired, very crudely, an earlier mosaic (apparently signed by its original maker) at Sidi bou Ali near Enfidaville, in Africa Proconsularis. Inspired perhaps by the example of his forerunner, he wrote once that he had both 'painted' and laid the pavement, and again, beside a primitively rendered bust of a woman, that it came from his hand, 'without a painter'⁴⁴ (figure 286).

The same sense, though in a work of considerably more competent execution, may be implied on a mosaic from Trikala in Greece with the names of two brothers, who give the full nomenclature of Roman citizens: Titos Flavios Hermes and Bassos, sons of Hermes. They assert, it seems, that they both 'drew' and laid the mosaic, which



285 Thebes, mosaic with inscription containing signatures of Demetrios and Epiphane. Archaeological Museum, Thebes. Probably first half of the sixth century AD.



286 Sidi bou Ali, Enfidaville (Africa Proconsularis), repaired mosaic signed by Sabinianus, 'without a painter'. Probably second half of the fifth to early sixth century AD.

shows the myth of Lycurgus and Ambrosia.⁴⁵ A painter (*zographos*) is also mentioned on a mosaic from the Greek island of Kephallonia, with a remarkable image of the personification of Envy (*Phthonos*) strangling himself and torn by wild beasts (figure 312). The long verse inscription which accompanies it, addressed to Phthonos, tells us that the painter drew (*graphe*) his image, which Krateros had made in stone. In the neighbouring room the name of Krateros appears again, along with his (nameless) son, on a mosaic showing a scene of sacrifice. The context seems to me to indicate that Krateros, whose name is given such prominence and on whose piety stress is laid in the second inscription, is the patron, not the craftsman who actually made the mosaic; the latter is not mentioned separately from the 'painter'.⁴⁶

The inscriptions therefore show that one distinction possible within the workshops was that between the process referred to as 'painting/drawing' and that of the actual laying of the tesserae. Further clarification can come only from the study of the mosaics themselves; I return to the question in the next chapter.

³⁹ *Edict. Dioclet. 7.6-7*: M. Giaccherio, *Edictum Diocletiani et Collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium* (Genoa 1974), 1, 1510-11; S. Lauffer, *Diokletianische Preisedikt* (Berlin 1971), 118-19. The Greek text gives [μουσι]αρίων κεντητή as equivalent to *musaeario*, [ψηφο]θέτη to *tessellario*. For the interpretation of the terms, see Bruneau, 'Philologie mosaïstique' (cit. n. 5), 33-4; Balmelle, Darmon 241-2. The Edict, which attempts to regulate maximum prices and wages, cannot be taken literally as indicating the normal standard of pay of the craftsmen named, still less can its provisions be applied outside the particular time and place where it was decreed: its main interest here is that it gives an indication of the relative scale at which the crafts were ranked. See Burford, *Craftsmen* (cit. n. 1), 143-4; for the general context of the Edict, most recently S. Corcoran, J. DeLaine, 'The unit measurement of marble in Diocletian's Prices Edict', *JRA* 7, 1994, 263-73. There seems no reason to suppose that the *pictor imaginarius* is to be identified with the *pictores* who designed or produced cartoons for mosaics, discussed in the next section.

⁴⁰ *Cod. Theod.* xiii.4.2, *De excusationibus artificum*; repeated with slight changes, *Cod. Just.* x.66.1.

⁴¹ Perinthos: above, n. 27. Father and son signing: possibly at Kephallonia (below, n. 46), though these may rather be the patrons; certainly Marianos and Aninas in the synagogues of Beth Shean and Beth Alpha (Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 69, 124, 125). Two brothers possibly at Trikala, below n. 45.

⁴² Δημήτριος Ἐπιφάνης τε τὸ μουσίον ποιεῖ, / Δημήτριος μὲν ἐννοήσας τὴν γραφήν, / ταύτης δ' ὑπουργὸς Ἐπιφάνης... : Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 59, 110; *Syntagma* 11, 157-9, no. 96, pls. 259-64; Bruneau, 'Philologie mosaïstique' (cit. n. 5), 17.

⁴³ Above, n. 19.

⁴⁴ [S]abinianus Senurianus pingit et pavimentav<i>t, and Sabiniani e manus / sine pictore: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 104-5, 182; L. Foucher, 'Note sur des signatures de mosaïstes', *Karthago* 9, 1958, 131-5. The repair probably dates from the Vandal period, the second half of the fifth or early sixth century.

⁴⁵ [Τ]ί[ι]ος Φλάβιος Ἑρμῆς καὶ [Βά]σσος, Ἑρμοῦ [υἱ]οί, ἑαυτοῖς τῶν γραφομένων ψηφοθέ[τ]αι: Bruneau, *RA* 1984, 2, 261-3. Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 129, c8, reconstructs the missing portions differently and interprets the two brothers as donors, who cause to be laid in mosaic the drawing (τ[α] γραφομένων α[ν] ψηφοθέ[τ]ησαν) that has been done for them; but Bruneau's reading and interpretation seem to me more convincing.

⁴⁶ Ὁ Φθόνος καὶ σοῦ τήνδε ὁλοῆς φρενὸς εἰκόνα γράψε / ζωγράφος, ἦν Κράτερος θήκατο λαϊνὴν: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 126, c5; K. Dunbabin, M. Dickie, 'Invidia rumpantur pectora. The iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman art', *JAC* 26, 1983, 7-37, esp. 30. Bruneau, *ibid.*, 264) and Balmelle, Darmon, 245, believe Krateros to be the mosaicist, but do not seem to me to give enough weight to the dedicatory character of the second inscription. See below, chs. 19, n. 26; 20, n. 36.

VI

One other piece of written evidence should be considered in this context. Although it does not tell us much about the craftsmen and their division of labour, it casts light on the way in which the work was organised, at least in one specific instance. We possess one contract for the laying of mosaics: a fragmentary papyrus (Pap. Cairo Zenon 59665) from the archive of an official named Zenon in Hellenistic Egypt in the middle of the third century BC.⁴⁷ It gives instructions for the mosaics to be laid in two rooms of a bathing establishment, presumably in Philadelphia in the Fayûm where Zenon was stationed. The first, probably in the men's baths, is to have a flower (apparently) of one cubit, for which the contractor is to follow a model (*paradeigma*) supplied from the royal palace. The instructions for the floor of the women's *tholos* are better preserved; it is to have a band of black, two fingers wide, then a pattern ten fingers wide described as a spiralling sea-shell (*kochlos nautikos*), almost certainly that known today as a wave-band, then another band to fit, and in the middle a poppy of one cubit. The outer part of both floors is to be filled with common, coarser stones or pebbles.⁴⁸

Several of the details in the papyrus are obscure or disputed; but for the present purposes two points are important. First, the design is specified in remarkable detail, even to trivial-seeming aspects such as the width of the borders. Secondly, it states clearly that a model was to be provided, from a central authority, which the contractor

is to follow for the most elaborate part of the design. In this case at least the design was evidently determined in advance by the patron or his representatives; all that the mosaicists (who may or may not be the same as the 'contractor') have to do is to follow instructions. This evidence for the provision and use of a *paradeigma* must be borne in mind in considering the questions of composition, procedure, and sources of the repertory that arise from the study of the mosaics themselves, and which will be considered in the next two chapters. However, the lesson of this one papyrus cannot necessarily be applied more widely, even to other mosaics of the same period, let alone to those of the Roman Empire. Hellenistic Egypt was always marked by a much more centralised system than other parts of the Hellenistic world, with government interference in many aspects of everyday life. Moreover mosaics must have been something of a novelty in Egypt outside Alexandria at this date, and the mosaicists presumably had to be brought in to the place from outside; this would make it more necessary to specify the nature of the work. Difficult though it is to assess the degree to which procedures may have changed in the long period and wide area covered in this book, we cannot assume that they remained stable.

Bibliography

Balmelle, Darmon; Donderer, *Mosaizisten*.

'decoration', in a contract like this the primary sense of 'flower' is much more likely. Daszewski (7–8) argues plausibly that the term *hexachoinikos psephos* used for the material of the outer borders of the two mosaics indicates a mixed technique with a contrasting (evidently finer) material used for the central portions. For the other problems of text and interpretation, see Bruneau and Daszewski, loc.cit.

⁴⁷ Ph. Bruneau, 'Un devis de pose de mosaïques: le papyrus Cairo Zen. 59665', in Στήλη. Τόμος εις μνήμην Ν. Κοντολέοντος (Athens 1980), 134–43; Daszewski 6–14.

⁴⁸ Bruneau, *ibid.*, 137–8, proposes that the central element in the men's baths, where the text reads [. . .] γραφικὸν ἄνθος, may refer to a figured decoration rather than to a flower. I do not find this convincing; while in literary texts *anthos* may be used more generally for

Techniques and procedures

A MOSAIC is a surface composed of discontinuous pieces, and its character reflects first and foremost the nature of the materials of which it is made. The shape, size, coloration, and texture of the pieces dictate the use to which they can be put and the effect that can be created. It is also, with rare exceptions, tied to an architectural setting, and decorates a surface of a specific shape, size, and character. The first task of the craftsmen was to assemble their materials, and the choice available to them varied according to the period at which they were working, their geographical location, and their economic means or those of their clients. Secondly they had to plan the lay-out of the design and accommodate it to the setting. The foundations had to be carefully prepared and the surface made level. The actual process of laying the tesserae could take place only after these preliminary tasks had been accomplished. This chapter will study all these various technical procedures required for the production of floor mosaics. Where relevant, reference will also be made to wall and vault mosaics; these shared some techniques and materials with pavements, but had a different origin, and their procedures were inevitably affected by the difference in setting.¹

I Materials

The earliest Greek mosaics used natural pebbles readily available from river-bed or seashore; their collection and sorting will have been a straightforward task. The colours were predominantly white and black, and to a lesser extent red and yellow-brown, and the size varied considerably, though a diameter between one and two centimetres is most common. The more elaborate and refined products of the pebble-mosaic technique, such as those of Pella and Vergina, called for a wide range of tones and the

careful selection of pebbles of varied sizes, some as small as five millimetres, for specific parts of the design. Much more effort must have been required for the preliminary work here, and it is likely that special sources for the material had to be sought.²

The irregular chips used for the chip-pavements of the Hellenistic period, at Delos for instance, were also readily available; they are clearly the waste products of masons and marble workers, used without further preparation. However the introduction of the cut tessera made two further stages necessary: the extraction of the material from the quarry and its cutting to the required size and shape. The quarrying was not necessarily carried out specifically for the purposes of mosaicists; much of their material would have continued to come from the workshops of builders and sculptors. However not all needs could be met so simply. In Delos coloured stone was not used for architecture or sculpture, yet the mosaics show a wide range of limestones in shades of red, yellow, and green, as well as a few tesserae of different lithic origin. The source, where identifiable, seems to be the neighbouring islands of the Cyclades, and the natural conclusion is that they were imported specially for the mosaics.³

Under the Roman Empire the range of available materials increased greatly, at least in the big cities, and many exotic materials could have been picked up easily. There was an enormous demand for coloured marbles and decorative stones for building, sculpture, and veneer, and the trade in these materials was organised on an empire-wide basis.⁴ However these were predominantly the more luxurious marbles and granites, not the limestones that form the stock material of the majority of polychrome mosaics. Moreover the range of colours and tones used for the finer figured and floral mosaics must always have required extensive research, whether this entailed sifting through the marble workers' waste or identifying a promising

¹ For wall mosaics, see Sear 41–3; Sear, 'Wall and vault mosaics' in D. Strong, D. Brown eds., *Roman Crafts* (London 1976), 230–9; Lavagne, *Operosa Antra* 399–437; above, ch.14. For *opus sectile* (not discussed here) see ch.15.

² Above, ch.1; Salzmann 43–4.

³ Bruneau, *Délos* 20–5.

⁴ See H. Dodge, 'Decorative stones for architecture in the Roman Empire', *OJA* 7, 1988, 65–80; R. Gnoli, *Marmora Romana*² (Rome 1988).

source in a quarry. The mosaicists undoubtedly derived their materials from any convenient source they could, and no great effort was required for the basic white and black; but a more complex process would have been required to identify sources of coloured stones not otherwise needed for building.

Where petrographic analyses have been carried out (which is not very often), the identifiable sources are predominantly local, or at least regional. An example is a mosaic with gladiatorial scenes at Augusta Raurica (Augst, Switzerland), a fairly standard medium-quality work of the late second to early third century AD. A detailed analysis here identified forty-two distinct varieties of stone, as well as a little glass and ceramic.⁵ Almost all the stones could have been obtained locally, within a radius of perhaps twenty-five to thirty kilometres; the authors calculate that between ten and twenty quarries will have been needed to produce them. Some was regular building material, but several varieties would not have been suitable for building, and may have been extracted specially for mosaics. Only a very limited use is made of materials from further afield – marble from the Alps and from Carrara, a deep black Lydite from the Vosges or the Black Forest. Studies in Britain have shown that on most sites the stones used were local, often available within a few kilometres, or if not, were common building stones.⁶ The late antique mosaics from Aquitania make extensive use of green ophites and blue-grey marbles from the Pyrenees, while limestones from several sources in the region provide the materials for most colours in common use.⁷ Materials available locally, predominantly limestone, have also been analysed in the House of the Triumph of Neptune at Acholla in Africa Proconsularis;⁸ at other sites in that province, the yellows and pinks of Numidian marble from the quarries at Simitthus (Chemtou) give a characteristic coloration to the finer mosaics. Occasionally, however, the materials can be shown to have been brought from further afield. For example in the Villa at Pedrosa de la Vega near Palantia in Hispania Tarraconensis, there is no good local source of stone and the villa itself was built largely of mud brick; the mosai-

cists must presumably have carried their materials with them laboriously from their home base.⁹

The materials determined the palette, and many mosaicists were content with what was readily available. In regions where greens are not plentiful, for instance, foliage may be represented in grey, blue, or even red. It is not uncommon for patterns to change colour in mid-pavement: the workman evidently ran out of one colour, and replaced it with whatever he had to hand. Changes in the palette used in a particular centre may reflect stones becoming unavailable, or the breakdown of the distribution system. Thus in certain mosaics of Byzantine Carthage the rich range of materials and colours which had been used in the fourth and fifth centuries was replaced by a very much narrower one, perhaps suggesting that some quarries were no longer in operation.¹⁰

Tesserae of artificial materials might also be used to supplement the colours of the stones. Artificial materials are present already at Pella, where beads of green clay were used in the mosaic of Dionysus for the god's wreath and the head of his thyrsus, and semi-precious stones may have been used for the eyes of several figures.¹¹ They became common in the tessellated mosaics of the Hellenistic age, where a primary concern of the artist was to imitate as closely as possible the naturalistic effects of contemporary painting. A recent study at Delos has identified glass tesserae used for a wide range of shades of blue and, especially, green, and more rarely for red and yellow, while green and blue are also rendered in faïence, a glazed siliceous paste. The authors suggest that the glass tesserae were cut from glass rods, and probably made locally, while the faïence is likely to have been imported from Egypt.¹²

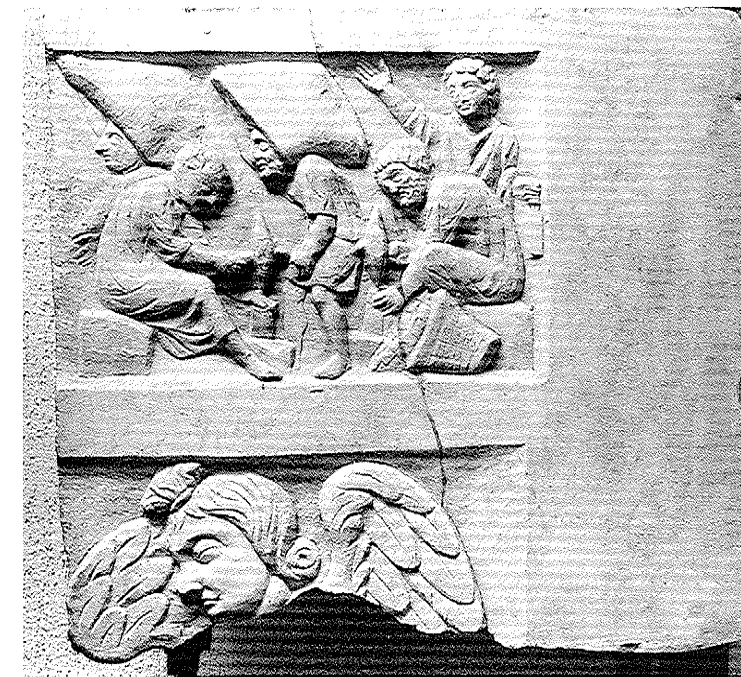
Glass tesserae became the most common material used in wall and vault mosaic from the mid-first century AD onwards. They continued to be used sporadically in floor mosaics when colours such as bright blues, greens and reds were desired; since they were less durable than stone, their use in floors is seldom extensive. Gold-glass, where a thin sheet of gold foil is sandwiched between two layers of clear glass, was used occasionally on walls and vaults, and

one example of silver-glass is recorded. These must all have been produced specially for mosaics.¹³ Tesserae were also frequently made of terracotta, and in a country such as Britain where there is no suitable red stone this was the most frequent source for that colour. They might be cut from tiles, from pottery vessels, or made and fired specially.

We have no evidence how all this trade was organised, nor how the mosaicists obtained their raw materials when they did not use waste from some other workshop. In many cities the demand must have been great; but we have no indication whether there was any sort of organised supply, or the mosaicists had to go themselves to the quarry or glass factory to make the necessary arrangement. Once the material was assembled the next task was the cutting of the tesserae to the required size and shape. In more recent times this has been carried out by hammering the piece of stone to be cut onto a chisel-like blade ('bolster-blade' or 'knapping-blade') set in a block of wood, and the process is unlikely to have changed very much since antiquity. It appears to be illustrated on a fragmentary grave stele at Ostia, probably from the beginning of the fourth century AD (figure 287). Two men in long, sleeved tunics are sitting hammering at small objects which they hold on an anvil-like block. In the foreground an upturned basket spills out a mass marked into squares by a series of straight lines, perhaps slabs of stone scored to be broken up. Two workmen in the background carry sacks on their shoulders, under the direction of another man. Though no inscription is preserved, we may assume that the scene is intended to illustrate the livelihood of the man whose grave it marked. Since a monument like this presupposes a moderate prosperity, he was presumably not an ordinary workman, but the owner/operator of a mosaic workshop.¹⁴

II Foundations and lay-out

Emblemata were prepared as independent panels on their own tray or backing; all other mosaics were an insepara-



287 Ostia, fragmentary grave stele showing mosaicists preparing tesserae. Museo Ostiense Inv.132. Probably beginning of the fourth century AD.

ble part of an architectural setting. The question whether some (or some parts) may nevertheless have been prefabricated will be considered below; but there can be no doubt that the normal practice was manufacture *in situ*. For a floor mosaic, correct preparation of the foundations was essential if the end product was to form a satisfactory level surface. Vitruvius, who wrote a book on architecture in the reign of Augustus, considered this to be part of an architect's responsibility; he gives detailed instructions for the laying of foundations for pavements (7.1). He starts with what he calls the *statumen*, a bedding of fist-sized stones, followed by the *rudus*, a mix of rubble and lime beaten solid to a thickness of nine inches, and then the *nucleus* or upper layer, a finer mortar mixed with three parts of crushed tile or potsherds to one of lime, and six inches thick. Above this the pavement, whether tessellated or sectile, is to be laid using level and rule. Naturally Vitruvius' ideal rules were not followed by all mosaicists, and the end-product depended on both the nature of the site and the degree of carefulness of the work. The general stages he distinguishes are found in most mosaics (figure

⁵ L. Berger, M. Joos, *Das Augster Gladiatorenmosaik* (Augst, BL, 1971), esp.84–104.

⁶ N. Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics* (Oxford 1984), 6–9.

⁷ *RecGaule* IV.2, 14.

⁸ Gozlan, *Maison de Neptune* 267–70.

⁹ Cf. P. de Palol, J. Cortes, *La Villa romana de La Olmeda, Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia)* 1 (Madrid 1974), above, ch.9, n.30. The materials are

described as marble and glass, with no use of ceramic (40–1); their origins are not analysed.

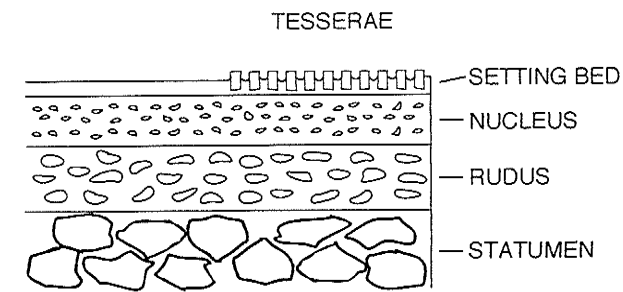
¹⁰ Ch.7, section VII.

¹¹ Ch.1, ns.23–6.

¹² A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, M.-D. Nenna, *BCH* 116, 1992, 607–31; *BCH* 119, 1995, 529–63; Bruneau, *Délos* 24–5; above, ch.2, n.42.

¹³ Gold-glass: see H. Schlunk, *Die Mosaikkuppel von Centelles* (Mainz 1988), 8–10; I. Fiorentini Roncuzzi, 'L'effetto oro sulle pareti musive', *CCARB* 40, 1993, 125–31. Silver-glass tesserae from the vault-mosaic of the Bath-Gymnasium at Samos: W. Martini, *Das Gymnasium von Samos* (Samos xvi, Bonn 1984), 201, n.337. Tesserae were also sometimes made from broken glass vessels.

¹⁴ Ostia, Museo Ostiense Inv.132: G. Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* (Berlin 1982), 36, 158 no.81; C. Robotti, 'Una sinopia musiva negli scavi nuovi di Pompei', in *Hommages Stern*, 313, pl.cc.1. Robotti believes that the man directing the two porters is the head of the workshop, directing the whole operation (and hence presumably the owner of the grave), but his position in the background makes this unlikely.



288 Diagram of mosaic foundations.

288). In all but exceptional cases it is possible to distinguish layers which can be described as *rudus* and *nucleus*, though there is wide variation in the thickness of the layers and in the ingredients and proportions of the mortar. It is not clear how much of this work the mosaicists themselves were responsible for: in a new structure the builders might have carried out the preliminary work. But the mosaicists were concerned to see that the final layer gave them a level base for their work, and the examples of guidelines scored into the *nucleus* while it was still damp (discussed below) show that they might be closely involved at this stage of the work.

Another very fine layer of mortar, the setting-bed, was required for the actual laying of the tesserae, but before proceeding to this the mosaicists had an important task: the planning of the design and lay-out. Anything more than the simplest of patterns required careful calculations to adapt it to the size and shape of the room. Normally an area known as an edging-band around the circumference of the room was filled with plain tesserae, a task which could have been left to an apprentice or assistant. Within this the area for the design is usually rectangular, occasionally circular or of some more complicated shape; it could be further subdivided in innumerable different ways. The width of the borders had to be determined, ranging from a simple fillet of two or three rows of tesserae to a succession of complex ornamental bands; and the design to cover the main field or fields had to be planned. Even a simple schema, such as a grid pattern, had to be carefully calculated to fit the space, with account taken of the width of the dividing bands. Many ornamental schemata involved very complex structures of maeanders or interlacing bands, or one scheme superimposed upon another, which would be disastrous if not planned in advance.

The studies of Richard Prudhomme and Susan Tebby have shown that, however complex these geometric designs appear in their final state, they can almost all be reduced to a simple underlying structure based on the principles of the orthogonal grid, the diagonal, and the arc of a circle.¹⁵ Competent experienced craftsmen would be familiar with the steps needed to construct the designs, using as tools only string and nails, compasses, and perhaps calipers. While a workshop might have possessed sketches giving directions for the construction of the more complex schemata, it is likely that the mosaicists relied mainly on their training from apprenticeship and their memory to direct them; what distinguished one workshop from another was the repertory of such designs preserved and handed on in the cumulative memory of the craftsmen. On the spot sketches might be necessary to determine the lay-out, while several examples show the use of preliminary guidelines on the *nucleus*. These may be scored into the surface of the mortar while it was still damp, or painted (usually in red or black) on the dry surface, or both. Some indicate the lines used in laying out the design, elements of the basic grid or its diagonals, others the actual guidelines for setting the tesserae.¹⁶

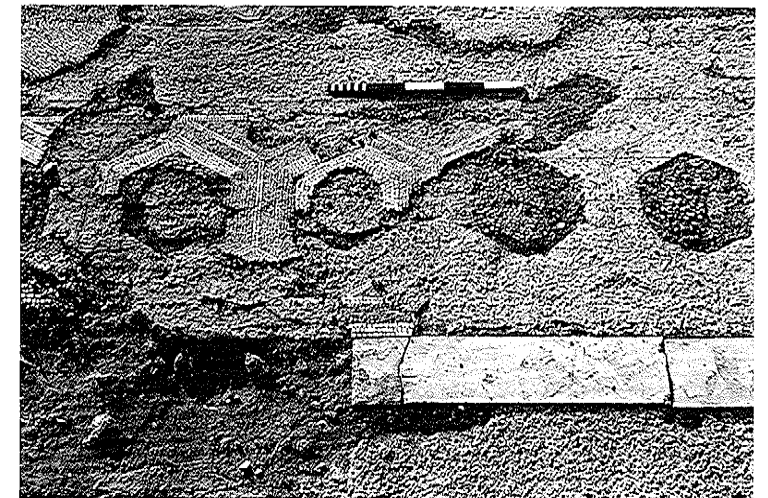
The use of such preliminary guidelines goes back to the Hellenistic period. An excellent example was found on a mosaic on Samos, probably of the mid-second century BC. It has a border of maeander, beneath which was a grid incised into the mortar, its base module equivalent to the width of the maeander bands. Strips of lead were inserted into the mortar following the lines of the grid, and served to outline the bands of the maeander above. The tesserae were set into an upper layer of fine mortar, the setting-bed, which would have covered the incised lines but left the lead strips showing, to act as guide for the tesserae.¹⁷ The use of lead strips as guides for geometric motifs was common in Hellenistic mosaics, especially for complicated patterns like a maeander which required great accuracy in laying out. In later periods their use was abandoned, and the mosaicists contented themselves with the preliminary drawings or incisions. These were normally covered little by little by the mortar of the setting-bed as the laying of the tesserae proceeded, leaving the

mosaicists to depend on their eye: a practice which led to greater speed but less precision.

In the late Republican Villa San Rocco at Francolise in northern Campania incisions alone were used as guides. The threshold to the *tablinum* (Room 12) was decorated with rows of hexagons containing rosettes; these were 'disguised *emblemata*' manufactured separately, following a practice discussed below, and the rest of the design was then laid around them. The lines for this were scored into the surface of the *nucleus*: first a series of parallel lines for the general lay-out, then orthogonal and diagonal lines to guide the setting of the hexagonal frames around the *emblemata* (figures 289, 290, 291). Another floor in the same villa had similarly incised guidelines marking out a border with a pattern of coffer.¹⁸

Incision and painting occur together on a pavement of the Villa Arianna at Stabiae in Campania (figures 292, 293). The mosaic itself showed a wide border (surrounding a central floral design, almost entirely destroyed) with an elaborate black-and-white pattern: a maeander marked by a plain black band, accompanied by broader black bands bearing pairs of white triangles arranged in an hour-glass design. On the mortar of the *nucleus* beneath are two sets of preparatory lines. First a grid, orthogonal and diagonal, was incised into the surface of the mortar with a sharp instrument; this permitted the overall construction of the pattern, and also marked the lines for the white triangles. Then a line was painted with a solution of charcoal to mark the exact outline for the maeander. The tesserae were laid over this, in a setting-bed of fine mortar eight millimetres deep; holes in the *nucleus* mark the places where nails must have held string to allow the lines to be maintained as the final layer spread over the surface. The procedure looks laborious, but it made it possible to achieve great precision even in so complex a pattern.¹⁹

A very similar maeander pattern (except that rows of triangles set apex-to-base replace the hour-glass motif) was more simply marked out on a pavement at Utica in Africa Proconsularis. No traces of incision were found, but the line of the maeander was painted in red on the setting-bed itself²⁰ (figure 294). It is tempting to see a

289 Francolise, Villa San Rocco, threshold mosaic of *tablinum*, showing prefabricated hexagons, hexagonal borders laid *in situ*, guidelines on *nucleus*. c.30 BC.290 Francolise, Villa San Rocco, threshold mosaic of *tablinum*, detail showing laying-out lines and guidelines scored on *nucleus*.

chronological development, with the very precise preparatory work of the Stabiae pavement giving way to the more summary treatment at Utica in the following century. It has also been suggested that there is an evolution from the early stage, as at Francolise, when the craftsmen who set the tesserae were also closely involved with the construction of the design, to the later one, when they

¹⁵ R. Prudhomme, 'Recherche des principes de construction des mosaïques géométriques romaines', *CMGR* 11, 339-46, pls. CLXI-CLXX; S. Tebby, 'Geometric mosaics of Roman Britain', *CMGR* v.1, 273-94.

¹⁶ Lists in Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 41-2, ns.175-7; M. de Vos, in A. Carandini *et al.*, *Settefinestre. Una villa schiavistica nell'Etruria*

romana (Modena 1985), 86-7, figs.104-6. For the procedures, see C. Robotti, *Mosaico e Architettura. Disegni, sinopie, cartoni* (Naples 1983), 17-34.

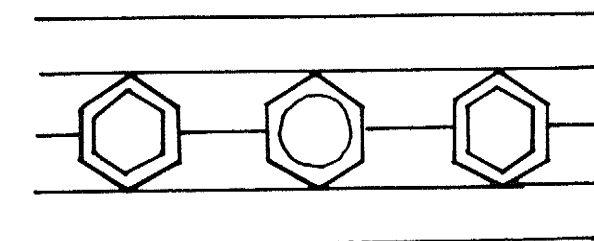
¹⁷ V. Giannouli, A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Deux mosaïques hellénistiques à Samos', *BCH* 112, 1988, 558, 566-7, fig.7.

¹⁸ G. Métraux, in M. Aylwin Cotton, G. Métraux, *The San Rocco Villa at Francolise* (Rome 1985), 100-4, 115-18, fig.13, pls. XXIX, XXXIII-IV.

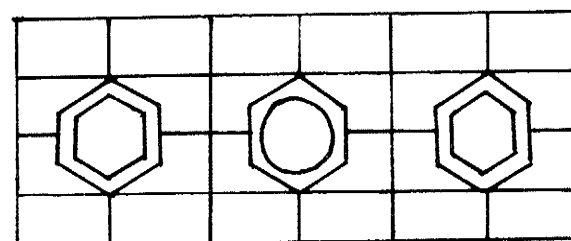
¹⁹ C. Robotti, 'Una sinopia musiva pavimentale a Stabia', *BdA* 58, 1973, 42-4; Robotti, *Mosaico e Architettura* (cit.n.16), 19-24, figs.3, 10; M.S. Pisapia, *MosAntIt.*, Reg.1a, *Stabiae* (Rome 1989), 40-1, no.73. Robotti dates it to the Claudian period, on the basis of the construc-

tion technique of the walls, although Pisapia proposes the late Republican period.

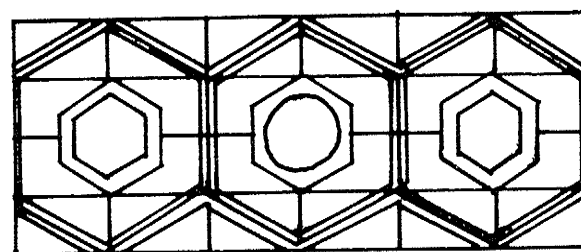
²⁰ Utica, House of the Cascade: *CMT* 1 *Utique* 1, 34-5, no.36, pl.LXI; end of first to beginning of second century AD. For the suggestion of the chronological development sketched here, see G. Métraux, *BullAIEMA* 10, 1985, 141-2.



A



B



C

291 Francolise, Villa San Rocco, threshold mosaic of *tablinum*, diagram showing construction of laying-out lines.

simply followed a trace established for them by the master-painter, a task which they could carry out more or less mechanically. Our sample of preparatory drawings is so small, however, that chronological conclusions of this sort can only be tentative.

Figured scenes and motifs required a different treatment. With wall mosaic, it appears to have been common practice for a preliminary sketch to be painted on the mortar, comparable to the *sinopie* of later periods. Such preliminary painting has been recorded, for instance, in blue under the figures of Ulysses and Polyphemus on the vault of the *Domus Aurea* of Nero in Rome, and in red under the figures of the dome of the Mausoleum at Centcelles in Spain.²¹ Modern sources discussing these drawings do not always distinguish clearly between colouring of the setting-bed of the tesserae, which could only be done bit by bit as the work proceeded and would remain visible between the tesserae (or would affect their colouring), and real preliminary sketches on the underlayer, intended as guides for the general composition rather than as models to be followed exactly. One very good example of such a preliminary sketch has been observed on a fountain at Pompeii (ix 7,2), where the artist has changed his mind between the underdrawing and the final version. The finished version showed a female figure and an Eros filling the corner above the niche; underneath it a swan was sketched on the mortar, but was never carried out.²²

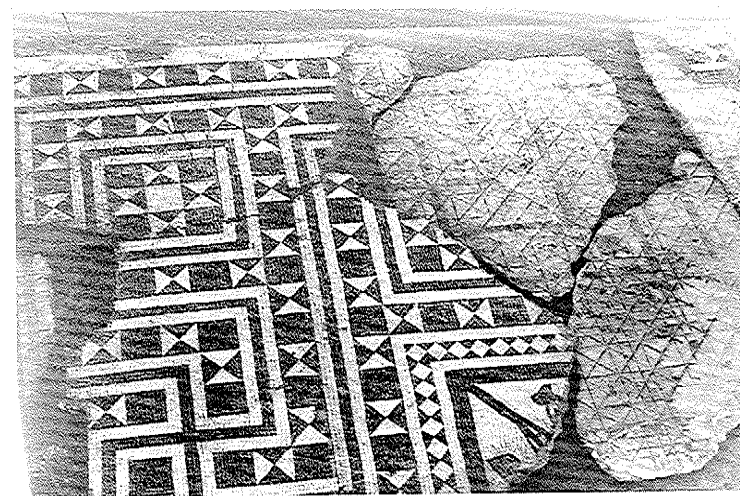
Only a little evidence has yet been discovered for comparable preliminary drawings for figured scenes beneath floor mosaics. A preliminary sketch in red on the mortar is said to have been observed under the Lion Hunt at Pella when the pebbles were lifted.²³ Another, showing a slightly different scheme from the final version, was found under the figure of Poseidon on a mosaic (not of very high quality) at Durreli di Realmonte (near Agrigento) in Sicily, probably of the late first to early second century AD.²⁴ On the Dionysiac mosaic at Sepphoris in Palestine coloured preparatory drawings are said to have been

²¹ *Domus Aurea*: H. Lavagne, *MEFR* 82, 1970, 693–4; above, ch.14, ns.17, 19. Centcelles: Schlunk, *Die Mosaikkuppel* (cit.n.13), 6, 178; above, ch.14, n.47. Further references in Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 41, n.174.

²² *Pompeii 1748–1980. I tempi della documentazione* (Rome 1981), 86–7, figs.5–6 (L. Vlad Borelli). The numbering of the fountain is wrongly given there as vi 9,7; for the unexcavated House of the Columned Fountain, see above, ch.14, n.25.

²³ Ph. Petsas, *CMGR* 1, 44; no further details have been published.

²⁴ Brief mention in M. Aoyagi, *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Archeologia, Messina* 3, 1988, 92 n.6.



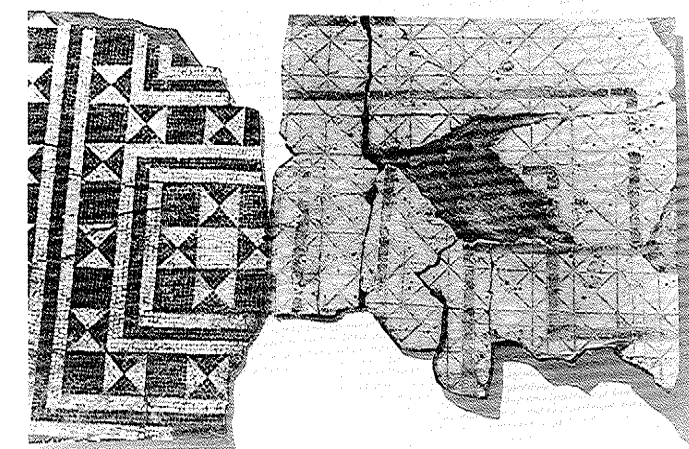
292 Stabiae, Villa Arianna, black-and-white mosaic showing painted and incised guidelines on *nucleus*. Probably mid-first century AD.

found on the 'upper plaster level of the floor foundation', preceded by a sketch of the basic compository guidelines incised on the lower mortar layer.²⁵ The same distinction, between coloured preparatory paintings on the setting-bed and incised guidelines on the *nucleus*, has also been observed in the mosaics of the Byzantine Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) near Jerusalem; the practice is comparable to that observed in wall mosaics.²⁶ Although the evidence remains patchy, it looks as though preliminary sketches were considerably more common on floor mosaics than has normally been assumed. Their identification depends upon the techniques used to raise the mosaics, or upon close observation of the setting-bed where tesserae are lost; only recently have sufficiently meticulous procedures become normal.

For the more complicated scenes detailed planning was necessary. Identification of the procedures followed is speculative and in part controversial. There can be little doubt that drawings must normally have been prepared beforehand. These could have ranged from rough sketches intended only to work out the basic composition, to more careful sketches which could have been shown to the client, or to full-scale cartoons on materials such as parchment or skin, intended for the workmen to follow. It was seen in the previous chapter that several of the signatures on mosaics mention a painter-draftsman carrying out some work distinct from that of laying the tesserae. The natural conclusion is that that work was the preparation of the drawings on which the mosaic was based. It is less clear, however, whether preparation of such drawings was either always or normally the work of different hands from those that actually executed the mosaic, or how common it was for the same craftsman to be both painter and mosaicist. The signatures which make the distinction are almost all either unclear or inconclusive. Once, at Sidi bou Ali near Enfidaville in Tunisia, a very inadequate craftsman announces that he has carried out the work without a painter, but his manifest lack of competence tells us nothing about the capacities of a normal worker.²⁷ Clearer is the inscription at Thebes, distinguishing between the man who 'thought out the drawing', and the

²⁵ Z. Weiss, R. Talgam, 'The Dionysiac mosaic floor of Sepphoris', *CMGR* vi, 236; above, ch.11, n.4. Fuller details are not yet available, but the distinction must be between paintings on the setting-bed and incisions on the *nucleus*.

²⁶ Y. Magen, R. Talgam, 'The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) and its mosaics', in *Christian*



293 Stabiae, Villa Arianna, black-and-white mosaic, detail of guidelines.



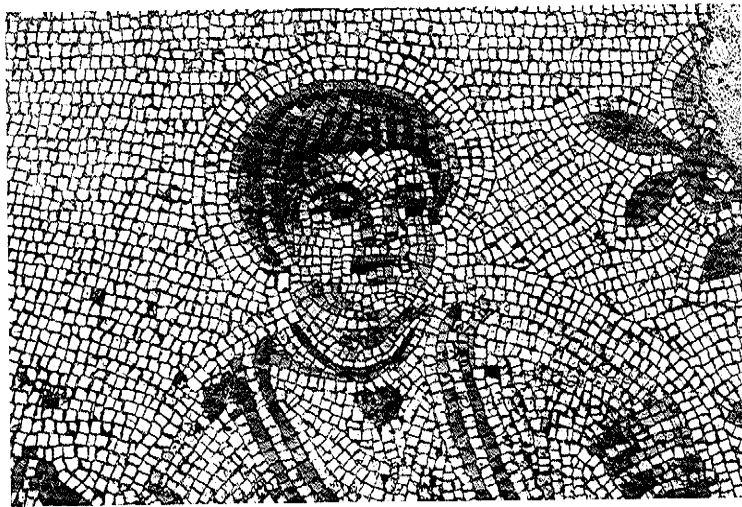
294 Utica, House of the Cascade, room xxvi, guidelines for maeander painted on setting-bed of mosaic. Probably end of the first to beginning of the second century AD.

man who 'executed' it; but both are said to have 'made' the mosaic.²⁸ Other inscriptions which refer only to a 'painter' (*pictor* or *zographos*) do not justify us in assuming automatically that he was not also involved in laying

Archaeology in the Holy Land. New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo, OFM (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Maior 36, Jerusalem 1990), 149–50. Second half of the sixth century.

²⁷ Above, ch.16, n.44.

²⁸ Ch.16, n.42.



295 Carthage, House of the Horses, Mosaic of Horses, detail of border with head of boy, showing worklines around figure. Antiquarium, Carthage. Early fourth century AD.

the tesserae.²⁹ It seems unlikely that any but very large workshops could afford the degree of specialisation which would allow the 'painter' to produce only preliminary drawings; a much more typical pattern might be expected to be the small workshop, where the master was responsible for all stages of the work.

The number of relevant inscriptions is in any case much too small to allow generalisations. The practice may have varied greatly at different periods, and would also have been affected by the ambitiousness or otherwise of the work. It is difficult to imagine that the Alexander mosaic or the cosmological mosaic at Mérida were composed without very detailed preliminary drawings. On the other hand an experienced craftsman could probably have handled more schematic figures and groups with little more than a sketch to indicate their placing. The question cannot be separated from the procedure of laying the tesserae, discussed below, nor from the problem of the sources of the mosaicists' repertory and of the possible use of copy-books, discussed in Chapter 18, section IV.

III Laying the tesserae, finishing

The preparatory work completed, the laying of the tesserae could proceed. Over the *nucleus* was spread a thin coat

of fine mortar, the setting-bed, often only a few millimetres deep; it would cover just as much at a time as the mosaicist could work while it was still wet, probably about one square metre at the most, less in finer work. In the finest Hellenistic mosaics this final layer of mortar might be coloured in patches to match the tesserae, introducing a further refinement in the imitation of the effects of painting; in more normal work it was often mixed with marble dust.³⁰ As seen above, a preparatory painting was sometimes applied to this setting-bed. Into this the tesserae were set, one by one by hand (or perhaps with pincers in exceptionally fine work), pressing them down firmly so that the wet mortar squeezed up between them. However detailed the preliminary drawings may have been, this was obviously the crucial stage which determined the finished product. Once again most of what can be said about it must be deduced from the works themselves, or from analogy with other, better documented periods.

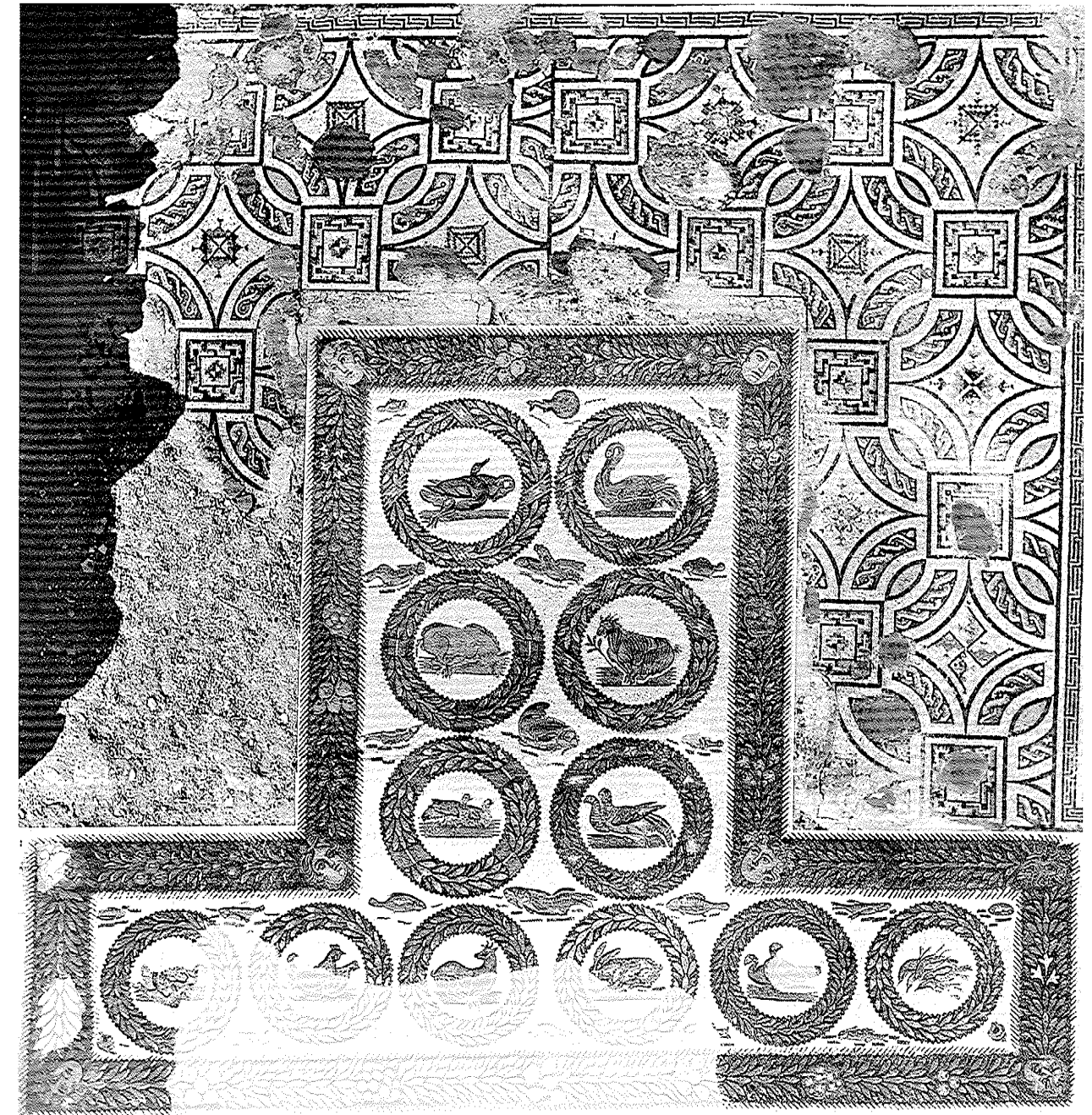
We can only guess, for instance, at the number of craftsmen who could work on a floor at any time, or at the possible division of labour between them. We may assume that the master-craftsmen would execute the more complex portions, and especially any fine figured sections, leaving to humbler assistants or apprentices the job of filling in plainer areas. Very often two or three rows of white tesserae surround the outlines of the figures, while the rest of the ground is filled in with roughly parallel straight lines; the figures clearly must have been executed first (figure 295). Where a marked difference of character or quality is perceptible between one part of a mosaic and another it is also natural to assume a difference of hands. More interesting are the mistakes or divergences in the execution of a design, which may be explicable as the result of two workmen starting at opposite ends, or by a failure to calculate the lay-out carefully beforehand. For instance, in the mosaic of a *triclinium* at Thuburbo Maius in Africa Proconsularis, the pattern covering the U-shaped area for the couches was evidently calculated to fit the spaces down the sides of the room; in the centre at the back two sections of design met awkwardly and had to be cut off abruptly³¹ (figure 296). Other 'mis-

²⁹ E.g. Hirinius at Carranque (ch.16, n.19), or the Silius who signed a mosaic at Thamugadi *Silius p(in)g(it)* (Germain, *Timgad* 19–23, no.17, pl.vii; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 107, A84). Several recent discussions of this question have assumed that the *pictor imaginarius* listed in the Edict of Diocletian as receiving the high wage of 150 *denarii* a day should be seen as equivalent to the 'painter' responsible for preparing the drawings for the mosaicists; but there is no reason to

suppose that the term has any reference to mosaics here (ch.16, n.39).

³⁰ For this setting-bed or 'supranucleus', see R. Moore, 'A newly observed stratum in Roman floor mosaics', *AJA* 72, 1968, 57–68. For coloured mortars in Hellenistic mosaics, see Bruneau, *Délos* 34; Guimier-Sorbets, Nenna, *BCH* 116 (cit.n.12), 625–6.

³¹ CMT 11 *Thuburbo Maius* 1, Maison des Animaux Liés, 107, no.83B, pl.xi.



296 Thuburbo Maius, House of the Bound Animals, *triclinium* XVIII, composite photograph showing maladjustment of pattern at back of room. Central panel Musée du Bardo, Tunis. Third century AD.

takes', or failures of design, can be seen on several mosaics in Britain. At Hinton St Mary, for instance, the bands of guilloche which frame the segments of the pattern needed to be linked at various points of junction; a great deal of unevenness is apparent in the execution of these links (figure 94). On two sides the borders of the central medallion and the flanking semi-circles are skilfully interwoven, but on the third the need to allow for this interweaving was forgotten: a single strand runs, an obvious afterthought, between the two borders.³²

Attempts have been made to identify different hands or teams at work in the sixty metre long corridor of the Great Hunt at Piazza Armerina, as seen in chapter 8. The vertical seams or sutures that can be seen clearly in the background allow the distinction of seven sections, which

³² Neal, *Roman Mosaics* 88, no. 61; above, ch.6, n.20. Other mistakes of this sort have sometimes been explained as due to prefabrication by the reverse technique (for which see below, ns.43–5), for instance in a panel of intersecting circles at Brantingham in north Britain; but see Ling, *CMGR* v.1, 81–5, fig.5, against this explanation.

very probably were the work of different teams of mosaicists³³ (figures 142, 143). However, breaks in composition of this sort do not necessarily indicate the presence of different hands; they might alternatively mark the amount laid in a single session, the equivalent of the *giornate* in a mediaeval fresco.

Once the tesserae were laid, there remained the final process of obtaining a smooth surface. This would of course have been a concern of the craftsmen throughout: the *nucleus* had to be carefully levelled, the tesserae pressed down evenly into the setting-bed on top of it; special care must have been taken to ensure that successive days' work were at the same level. In addition to all this, the finished floor then had to be ground (as Vitruvius 7.1.4 recommends) to eliminate any remaining unevenness. The upper surface of the tesserae sometimes shows the marks of grinding, and stones suitable for grinding have occasionally been found. In the Fountain Court at Kenchreai four such stones were found along with heaps of tesserae, the marble from which they were cut, and a heap of red abrasive for polishing.³⁴ A thin wash of plaster, sometimes coloured, might then be spread over the floor to fill up the interstices between the tesserae, and marble dust might be sprinkled over it.³⁵

IV Prefabrication

The discussion so far has assumed that the mosaics were laid directly on the spot. This is demonstrated in several cases by the discovery of debris from the process of manufacture in close association with the finished products. In the House of the Nymphs at Neapolis (Nabeul) in Africa Proconsularis excavators found fragments of the mosaicists' waste products in several places. Beneath the pavement of the peristyle were fragments of polychrome marble comparable to those used for the figured panels of the two main wings; beneath the entrance, fragments

comparable to those of the peristyle. Darmon concludes that the mosaicists started by preparing their tesserae in the still unpaved peristyle, then moved to the entrance while they laid the mosaics in the peristyle itself.³⁶ At Acholla in the House of the Triumph of Neptune a room next to the entrance seems to have been used to prepare the tesserae; its surface was a compacted mass of mortar mixed with very numerous small chips of coloured stones, which appear to be the fragments left after the tesserae were cut.³⁷ The most extensive finds were in a villa at Pont d'Ancy in Gallia Belgica, known unfortunately only from a nineteenth-century report. In a room here were found a stone anvil or knapping-block, large quantities of prepared tesserae, a mortar for crushing tile or potsherds, and a pan for lime, all apparently abandoned suddenly.³⁸

Nevertheless the possibility must be considered that not all mosaics were laid directly, but that some were prepared beforehand and transported in a prefabricated state. This was of course the practice with *emblemata*, which by definition were made on their own backing, usually in a tray or tile which was then set into the mortar and the rest of the pavement laid around it. We can safely assume that they were made by the artist-craftsman in his own workshop, where he could carry out the very delicate work of handling the minute tesserae. The finds at Pompeii of *emblemata* among items apparently for sale confirm that they could have an existence independent from any final setting.³⁹

Separate manufacture was also possible for mosaics, or parts of mosaics, that did not have their own independent trays. Many floors contain panels or compartments which differ in technique and sometimes materials from the surrounding elements, and which may be identified as 'disguised *emblemata*': that is, they were made separately on a temporary backing such as wood or canvas, which was either removed or has disintegrated. Evidence for such a procedure can occasionally be found. On the threshold

mosaic in the Republican villa at Francolise discussed above, the fifteen hexagons containing rosettes were manufactured separately, with their own *nucleus*; the consistency of this was much more friable than that of the surrounding floor and most of them have disintegrated, leaving a depression visible in the *nucleus* of the rest of the pavement⁴⁰ (figure 289). The mosaic of the Months at Thysdrus (El Djem) contains sixteen small panels showing the Months and the Seasons, framed in an elaborate ornamental pattern (figure 113). Foucher was able to establish that the panels were laid in thin layers of mortar and set into the previously made frame, where wooden bars had been set around the spaces to receive them.⁴¹ Elsewhere differences have been noted in the consistency of the mortar beneath distinct parts of a mosaic, suggesting that the sections have been manufactured separately.⁴²

More complex methods of prefabrication involving larger portions have also been proposed. Modern mosaics are regularly manufactured in the studio and transported in sections to their final setting; the practice is known as the 'Indirect Method'. Two alternative methods of setting the tesserae may be used, one positive (sometimes called 'double reverse'), the other reverse. With the first, the tesserae are set in a tray of sand; when the work, or a suitable portion of it, is complete, a piece of cloth or similar material is glued to the surface. It is then transported to the site and set into fresh mortar; when this has hardened, the glue is dissolved and the cloth peeled off. The reverse method (more common today) follows a similar procedure, except that the tesserae are glued face-down onto a full-size cartoon, so that what is exposed is the back of the final version. It is then turned over at the site, and set in the same way. Either of these methods could theoretically have been used in antiquity. It has been argued that substantial sections of mosaic could have been prepared in this way, even an entire floor apart from the edging-bands. The sections could then have been transported considerable distances, thereby cutting very substantially

the amount of time that the mosaicists had to spend on site, and correspondingly the time for which the customer had to endure the noise and dirt of their operation.⁴³

Mass production and prefabrication were by no means unknown in the industrialised crafts of the Roman Empire. A very similar procedure was in fact adopted for *opus sectile*, which has been shown to have been regularly manufactured by the reverse method and transported in prepared sections; the glass *opus sectile* panels from Kenchreai provide an excellent example.⁴⁴ However there is no proof that the Romans used the reverse method for mosaics, and many of the arguments that have been invoked in support of this theory are very doubtful. It has been suggested, for instance, that many mistakes visible in the finished mosaics can be explained by their having been set in reverse and the final image not seen by the craftsman until it was irreparable; all the supposed examples, however, can be shown to be easily explicable in other ways.⁴⁵ There are practical problems, such as the nature of the materials used for the full-scale cartoons required with this method, and the manner of transferring a design to them in reverse, in the absence of any equivalent to the tracing-paper used today. These are not insoluble: the drawings could have been done on prepared canvas or hides, and the design pricked through to reverse it. At the moment, the question must remain open.

We cannot, then, rule out the possibility that sections of mosaic much larger than normal *emblemata* were prefabricated, using one of the techniques discussed above, and even that whole floors could have been constructed in this way; but nor is there solid evidence to substantiate it. The strongest argument against it comes from the expense and difficulty of transport in antiquity. While the Kenchreai panels show that heavy objects of fragile material could be transported, they come from a seaport; land transport was much more laborious and precarious. When they wished, the Romans could transport heavy

³³ Ch.8, n.20. The suggestion that these sections were prefabricated separately seems to me unlikely: cf. R. Wilson, *AJA* 86, 1982, 427–8, and below, section IV.

³⁴ R. Scranton, J. Shaw, L. Ibrahim, *Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth I, Topography and Architecture* (Leiden 1978), 68, 127–8, pl.XLIX d.

³⁵ Cf. Moore, 'A newly observed stratum' (cit.n.30), 60. For the practice of painting the surface see Guimier-Sorbets, Nenna, *BCH* 116 (cit.n.12), 626.

³⁶ Darmon, *Nymfarum Domus* 79; the fragments included unshaped chunks, prepared strips ready to be split, and tesserae.

³⁷ Gozlan, *Maison de Neptune* 251, 267–8, pl.LXXXIX.

³⁸ *RecGaulle* 1.1, 56, no.81G. Stern doubts whether these were necessarily intended for domestic purposes or might have had a commercial function, but in a villa they would have been more likely to be intended for use on the spot. Other examples of finds of mosaicists' debris are listed in Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 45, n.195; D. Johnston, 'The prefabrication and removal of mosaics in Roman Britain', *CMGR* 111, 526–7; Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics* (cit.n.6), 114–15; some of these may come from repairs, or be store-rooms for spare materials.

³⁹ Above ch.3, n.11. For *emblemata* see also A. Balil, *Estudios sobre mosaicos romanos IV* (*Studia Archaeologica* 39, Valladolid 1976).

⁴⁰ Métraux, *The San Rocco Villa* (cit.n.18), 100–2.

⁴¹ Foucher, *Thysdrus* 1961 31; Parrish, *Season Mosaics* 156–60, no.29, pls.42–4.

⁴² M. Donderer, in *Das antike Rom und der Osten. Festschrift für Klaus Parlasca zum 65. Geburtstag* (Erlangen 1990), 25, draws attention to a mosaic at Titmoning in southern Germany, where the mortar under the whole ornamental carpet differed from that of the plain surround. However this is not necessarily conclusive proof of prefabrication; the differences may reflect only distinct stages of manufacture, with mortar mixed in successive batches. Cf. D. Johnston, *CMGR* 111, 527–8.

⁴³ For a definition of the reverse technique see P. Fischer, *Mosaic. History and Technique* (London 1971), 46–8, 146–7, who does not believe that it was used in antiquity. Cf. also Cookson, *Romano-British Mosaics* (cit.n.6), 12–13.

⁴⁴ Above, ch.15, ns.18, 48–9.

⁴⁵ See R. Ling, 'Against the reverse technique', *CMGR* v, 77–88; cf. Johnston, *CMGR* 111 (cit.n.42), 527–8; above, n.32. For the argument applied to the Alexander mosaic, most implausibly, see above, ch.3, n.22.

building materials vast distances, by sea or land; but in general it was easier to move men and to do the work on the spot. If a houseowner wanted badly enough to have his mosaics laid with the minimum disruption, then it is likely that parts could indeed be prepared in advance; but the normal procedure must surely have been to bring the mosaicists to the job.

V

The gaps in our knowledge of the basic technical processes of the ancient mosaic workers have been all too apparent throughout this chapter. Some of them are crucial for our understanding of the nature of the finished work. In more recent and better documented times the art of mosaic has varied between two types of procedure. In one form mosaic is the product of a master-craftsman/artist, working of course with assistants, but responsible for, and engaged in, every stage of the work: from the production of the tesserae, through the planning of the design, the execution of the preliminary drawings, the preparatory sketches on the surface to be decorated, to the actual laying of the tesserae. At the other extreme is industrialised production, where the materials are mass produced, the drawings prepared by a distinct artist who is primarily a painter, and the mosaic workers have merely to set the tesserae in accordance with his instructions; if the reverse method is adopted they have simply to set them into the correct places on a cartoon. The first method is characteristic of the great mediaeval and Byzantine mosaic programmes, the second of the mosaics of the Renaissance and the early modern period.⁴⁶

It would, however, be mistaken to try to fit the development of ancient mosaics into a similar spectrum. The period in antiquity when the mosaicists tried most closely to imitate painting was precisely that in which we can be most sure that the mosaics were worked directly and not mechanically produced. The fine Hellenistic picture-mosaics, with their minute tesserae and coloured

mortars, cannot have been produced in any other way than by the mosaicist setting the tesserae directly, with the closest attention to their colouristic effects. The fact that a painting – sometimes undoubtedly a famous masterpiece by a well known painter – is being copied does not make the process of copying in any way mechanical. At the same period the more frequent geometric and ornamental mosaics were executed with the most careful attention to detail, which tied together all stages of production from the foundations to the final polishing. It is very likely that there was a distinction between the makers of *emblemata* – which were never common – and the ordinary mosaicists; but there can be no doubt that the latter were involved in every stage of the production of their pavements, apart from the rare cases when they had to install an imported *emblema*.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to see the process under the Empire as more mass-produced and even industrialised. It is likely that the craftsmen responsible for laying vast areas of floor worked out various shortcuts which allowed the work to proceed more quickly, at the cost of the very fine quality typical of the earlier work. But it is at this stage that mosaic ceased to imitate painting, and developed procedures that exploited the full potential of the medium. Whatever part preliminary drawings or sketches may have played in the preparation of mosaics under the Empire, the finished product is in no sense simply a transposition of a pictorial prototype. Other factors are much more important: the lay-out of the whole, the effect of the materials, and the role of the mosaic as a two-dimensional decorated surface in a specific architectural setting.

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⁴⁶ Good accounts of the methods of work of mediaeval mosaicists (in wall mosaic) in C. Harding, 'The production of mediaeval mosaics: the Orvieto evidence', *DOP* 43, 1989, 73–102; for Byzantine, D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios* (Athens 1985), 94–106, and more generally D. Winfield, 'Middle and later Byzantine wall

The repertory

I Geometric

The greatest part of the mosaicists' repertory at all times consisted of ornamental designs, predominantly geometric in character. At the period of its greatest extension the complexity and elaboration of this repertory are vast: no comparable range of ornament survives in any other single medium from antiquity. The 1985 volume, *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine*, which set out to catalogue and classify the ornamental compositions used between the first century BC and the sixth AD, lists and illustrates more than sixteen hundred different designs.¹ These are divided into two categories, linear and surface patterns. The first are used either for borders or to outline the individual forms in the surface patterns. The designs covered under the latter heading are isotropic, that is, they are capable of indefinite repetition in any direction over a surface. Another category, centralised patterns, has not yet been treated. Within each category a limited number of basic groups can be distinguished; these in turn can be subdivided into a much larger number of variants. Within the category of surface patterns the groups are based upon the underlying schema, which usually has a fairly simple geometric form, such as the grid-pattern, patterns based on octagons, on circles, or on meander. Endless variation is possible, however, in the way these schemata are treated and interpreted.²

The designs range from very simple arrangements of basic geometric forms to immensely complicated combinations where one pattern is superimposed upon another and subsidiary motifs are used to outline or to fill the basic elements. Some are the common stock-in-trade of mosaicists at almost all times and places, others characterise particular regions or centres, or are confined to

limited periods. In general the basic compositional schemata, once established in the repertory, spread and persist very widely, but their variations often reflect regional preferences or chronological development. Analysis of aspects such as the distribution of the compositions over the surface, their use in combination with one another, and their evolution in the direction of greater elaboration or schematisation, has enabled specialists to identify the characteristics of regional or local styles and, somewhat tentatively, of individual workshops. Since there are frequently no external criteria for dating the mosaics such studies have often provided the best ground for establishing chronologies. Much remains to be done in this respect; in particular the application of computer-based techniques is likely to lead to rewarding results.³

It is not possible to give here a systematic survey of this vast mass of material; some developments have been discussed in the relevant chapters of part I. At the risk of oversimplifying three main periods may be distinguished. The mosaics of the Classical and Hellenistic periods form the first group, marked by a characteristic approach to composition and a restricted range of ornament. The great period of expansion and invention, when most of the common compositional schemata were introduced, began with the late Republican and early Imperial mosaics of Italy, and continued with ever greater elaboration among the provincial workshops of the first three or four centuries AD. A final stage may be distinguished in late antiquity, from the fourth century to the break-up of the western Empire and to the early Byzantine mosaics of the east. Although some older elements continued to be used at this time, a fundamental change of taste is apparent and new designs and motifs appeared.⁴

The decorative range of the mosaics from the Classical

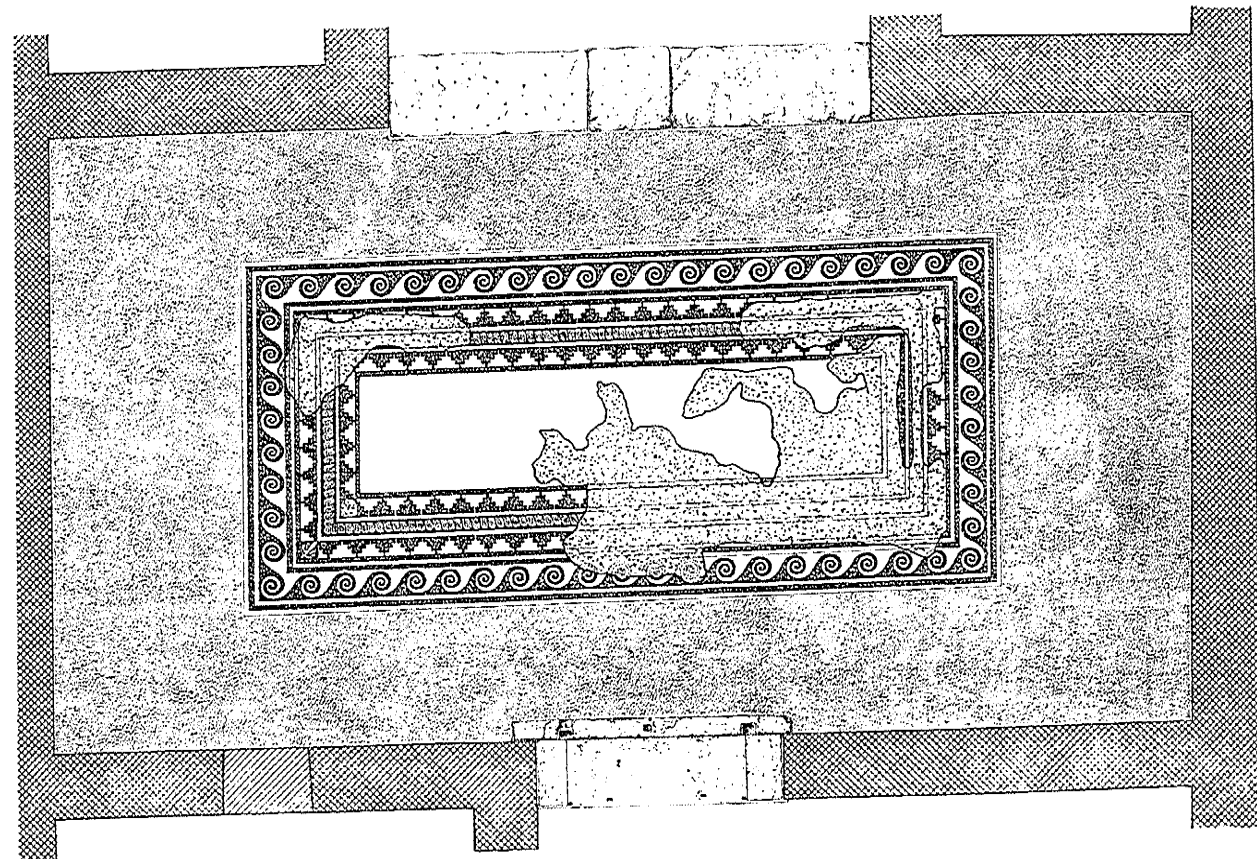
CMGR III, 515–24; also K. Schmelzeisen, *Römische Mosaiken der Africa Proconsularis. Studien zu Ornamenten, Datierungen und Werkstätten* (Frankfurt am Main 1992), for which see above, ch. 7, n. 4. For work on the British mosaics see above, ch. 6, ns. 12–14.

⁴ In a fuller treatment further subdivisions would be desirable, for instance between the Classical and Hellenistic periods, and distinctions would be drawn on a geographical basis.

¹ *Décor*, it proposes a standardised vocabulary in five languages to harmonise the description of ornamental designs. See the review of S. Gozlan, *RA* 1988, 416–20.

² See also G. Salies, 'Untersuchungen zu den geometrischen Gliederungsschemata römischen Mosaiken', *BjB* 174, 1974, 1–178, for an earlier attempt to analyse the basic compositional schemata.

³ Cf. A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Une banque de données sur la mosaïque dans le monde grec, des origines à la fin de l'époque hellénistique',



297 Delos, House B, Room F, drawing of geometric mosaic. c.130–88 BC.

and Hellenistic periods is much more limited than that under the Empire. The earliest pebble mosaics depend on a few common border-patterns, such as the wave-band and maeander, which continued to be used and exploited for centuries to come. This repertory was gradually expanded, especially after the appearance of tessellated mosaics, but even at Delos or Pergamon it is not very extensive. A characteristic mosaic at Delos has a central rectangle of tessellated mosaic, with a succession of concentric borders around the central field (figure 297; see also figure 32). Typical border-patterns include wave-band, guilloche (simple or complex, sometimes with a three-dimensional effect), maeander, and crowstep, all usually accompanied and separated by a series of plain black or white fillets. The central field may be plain or ornamented, for instance with a three-dimensional perspective maeander.⁵

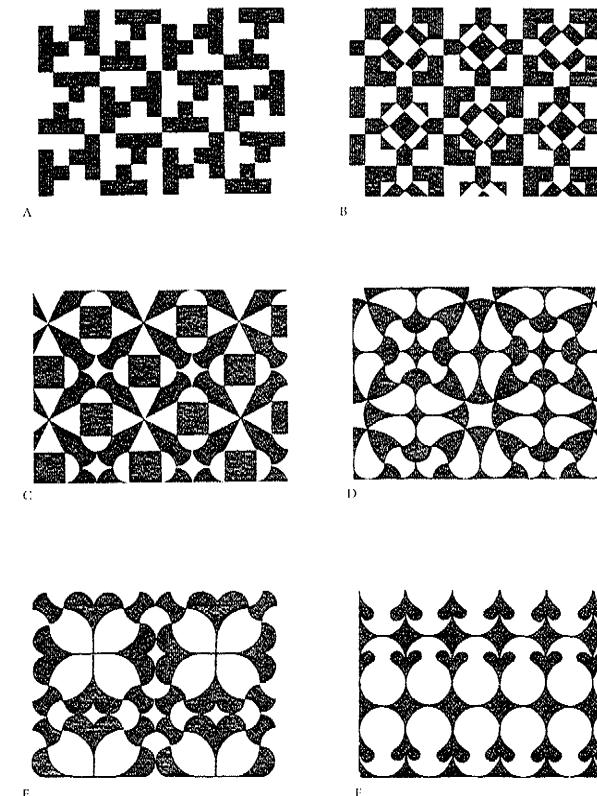
Few of the motifs seem to have been developed specifically for mosaics. Most belong to the standard ornamental vocabulary of Greek art and architecture,

which had been used in a wide variety of media from a date long before the appearance of mosaic: wave-band, guilloche, maeander, bead-and-reel, crowstep. In most cases they are so common that it is futile to try to identify one particular medium from which the mosaicists derived them. A few suggest more clearly their origins in another medium, though it should be noted that they may all be found also in contemporary painting, by way of which they may have come to mosaic. In the Hellenistic period some patterns are frequently rendered in an illusionistic three-dimensional manner which deliberately recalls their derivation from architectural ornament, for instance the bead-and-reel, the band of dentils, and the chain-guilloche. For others a derivation from textiles is likely, despite the lack of surviving examples; patterns such as crenellation and crowstep, where designs in two colours form complementary images, are particularly well suited to be executed in weaving.⁶ Some of the designs used to fill the central fields, or occasionally to cover the entire floor, imitate the effects of cut paving

A. Ovadiah, *Geometric and Floral Patterns in Ancient Mosaics* (Rome 1980), 89–160, but methodological flaws make his conclusions unreliable: for reviews see D. Salzmann, *Gnomon* 1983, 737–43; G. Hellenkemper Salies, *BjB* 181, 1981, 677–80.

⁵ Bruneau, *Délos* 37–42, 46–56, 62–70.

⁶ Cf. Salzmann 54–5; Bruneau, *Délos* 46–56; Daszewski 34–53, with numerous references. An attempt to identify the origins of ornamental patterns used in mosaics down to the age of Augustus is made by



298 Selection of black-and-white patterns from Rome and Ostia (for sources see note 9).

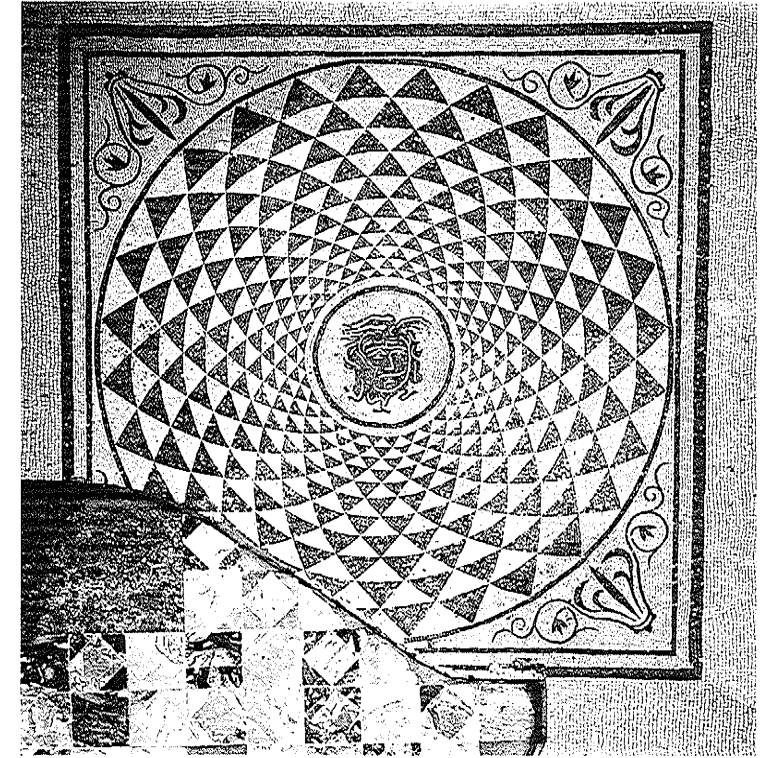
slabs of stone or marble; especially popular are the *trompe l'œil* designs of cubes in perspective, found also in early examples of *opus sectile*.⁷

The increase in production of mosaics in Italy during the late Republic and early Empire, and the development of the black-and-white mosaic, cheap and rapid to produce, led to an enormous growth in the ornamental repertory.⁸ New motifs and above all new schemes of composition were adopted, especially for the all-over designs that became common in the first century AD. Their origins varied widely; among them are adaptations of patterns used in painting and for stuccoed ceilings. More important than their formal origin is that once introduced they were elaborated and varied within the mosaic workshops themselves: the repertory became specific to the medium of mosaic.

In the mature black-and-white style two basic ornamental principles may be distinguished. Designs may be based on the use of contrasting areas of black and white,

⁷ A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets, 'Mosaïques et dallages dans le monde grec aux époques classique et hellénistique', *CMGR* v.1, 13–25; above, ch.15, n.6.

⁸ For this process see Blake 1930; 1936; M.L. Morricone, *EAA* suppl. (1970), s.v. mosaico, 504–31; also Salies, 'Untersuchungen' (cit.n.2), for the compositional schemata.



299 Ostia 11.8.5, House of Apuleius, shield of triangles with Gorgoneion superimposed on earlier sectile pavement. 4.80 m × 4.0 m. Mid-second century AD.

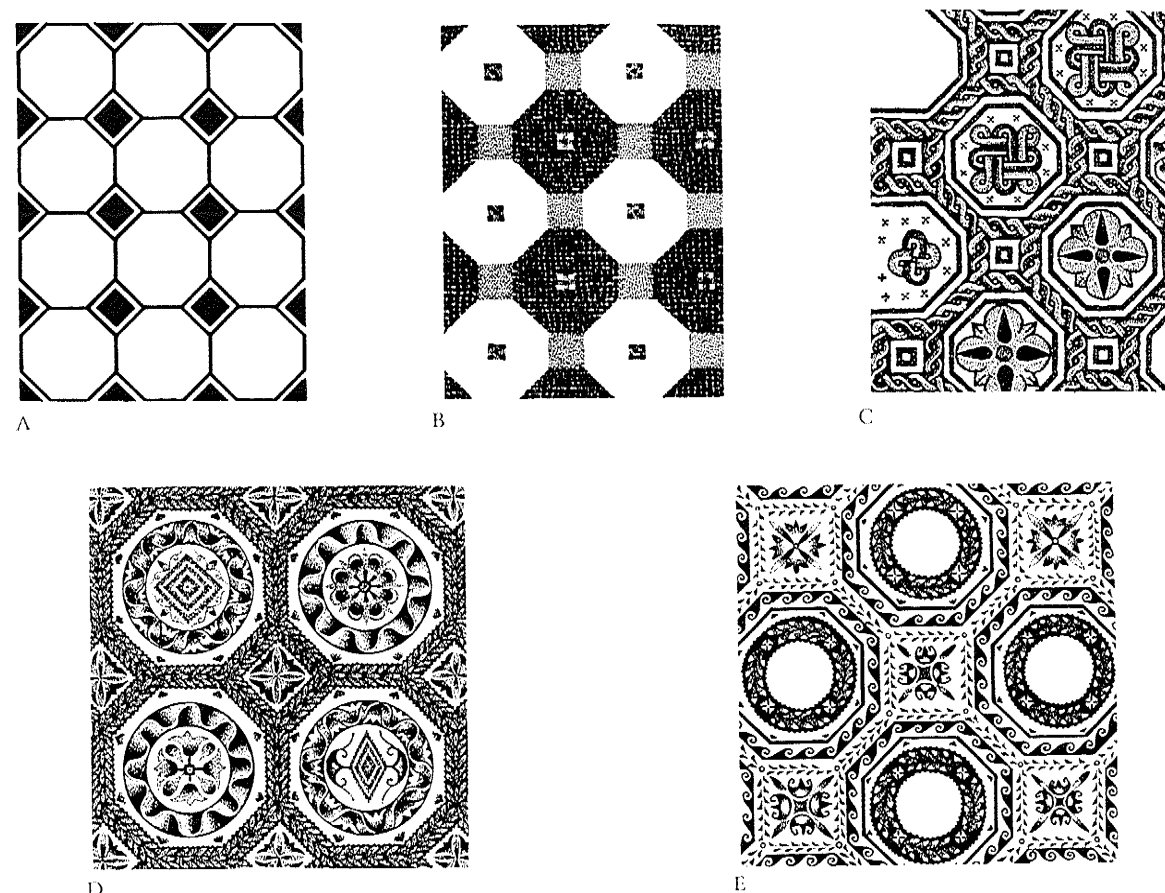
as on the series of floors from Rome and Ostia represented in the drawings of figure 298.⁹ This method sometimes produces sophisticated optical effects, such as the 'shields' of radiating triangles or related shapes¹⁰ (figure 299). Alternatively a geometric schema is outlined, almost always in black on a white ground, creating compartments which may be filled with further ornament. For example, one of the most popular schemata is the pattern of stars formed of eight lozenges, with squares between, which lent itself to many variants for the next three centuries¹¹ (for example figures 56, 167).

The geometric schemata, the border-patterns, and the filling motifs together spread to the provinces, and established the basic ornamental repertory throughout the Roman world. The preference of most provincial workshops for polychromy made possible a much richer execution, and the second, third and fourth centuries were marked by an ever greater process of elaboration and variation. The great majority of the complex compositions, linear or surface, listed in *Décor* date from this

⁹ *Décor* 117a (Rome); 117f (Ostia); 159a (Rome); 159c (Ostia); 160a (Ostia); 160f (Ostia): for sources see references in *Décor*.

¹⁰ Cf. G. Hellenkemper Salies, 'Irritations optiques dans l'ornementation pavimentale romaine', *CMGR* vi, 423–30.

¹¹ Cf. also Salies, 'Untersuchungen' (cit.n.2), 5, 26–34 ('Rautensternsystem I'); *Décor* pl.173ff for variants.



300 Variants on pattern of adjacent octagons forming squares (for sources see note 12).

period. In the more complex floors the geometric schemata are frequently outlined by a linear pattern, such as guilloche (the most common), cable, wavy ribbon, maeander, or by several of these in combination. The individual compartments of the composition may also have their own separate frames of similar linear patterns.

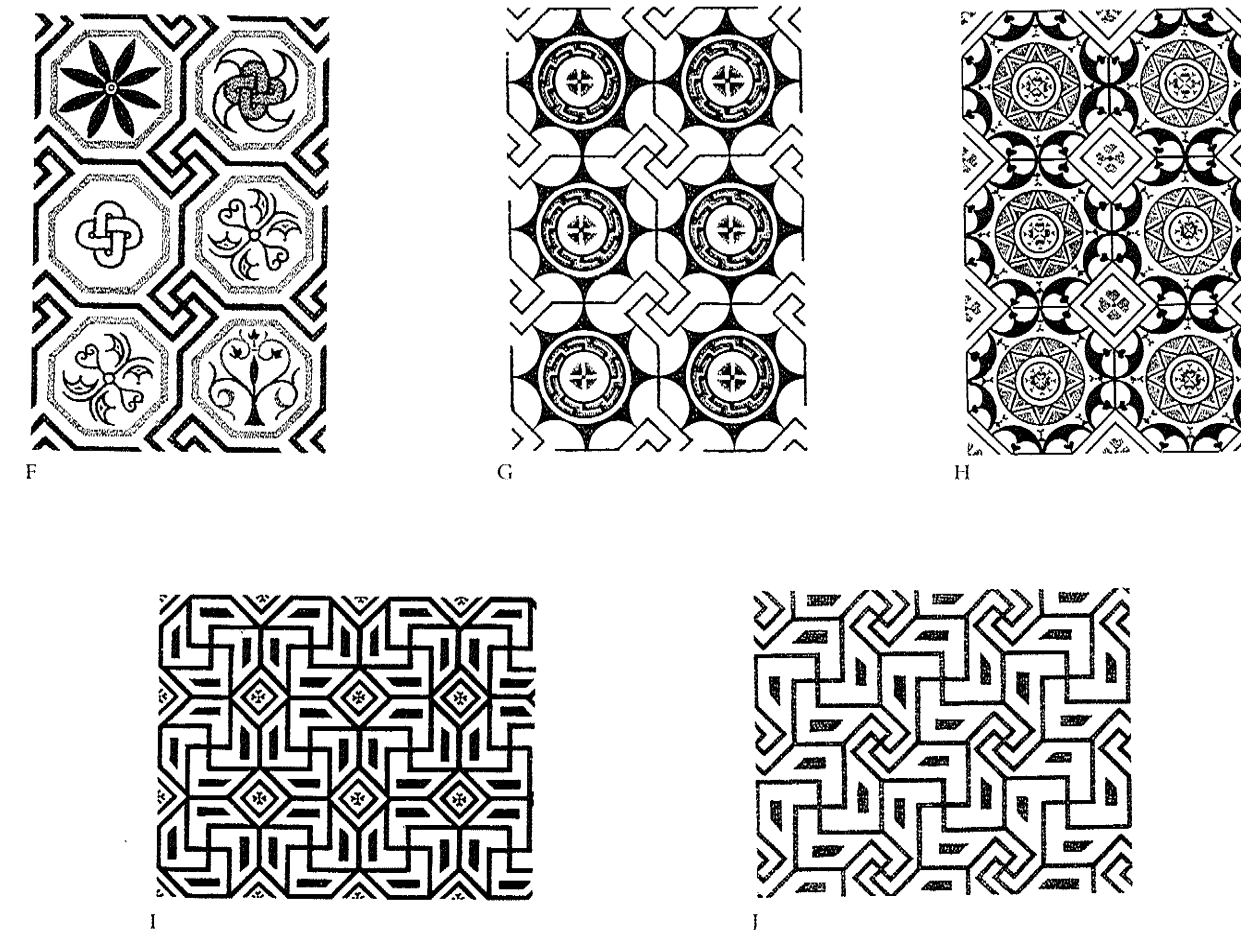
Figure 300 illustrates how varied can be the rendering of a single basic schema. The examples are taken from widely different parts of the empire: Italy, Gallia Belgica, Aquitania, Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, the Greek islands.¹² All are variants upon a single composition: a pattern of adjacent octagons forming squares between them, laid out so that the squares are either upright or oblique. Variations come from the opposition of colours (a, b), and from the different linear patterns used to outline the basic scheme (c, d: guilloche, laurel wreaths). In (f) and (g) the solid outline of the square is replaced by

lines of swastika-maeander, which are used to 'work' the octagons. When the octagons themselves are filled by swastika-maeander (i, j), the underlying scheme virtually disappears; in (i) an alternative pattern is created, the key-pattern of running swastikas, which is in fact more easily 'read' than the octagons. Further variations come from the treatment of the individual compartments: left plain, filled with regular, repetitive motifs, or with varied ornaments; elaborated with their own borders, single or multiple, repeated or varied.¹³

As discussed in the previous chapter, the schemata themselves depend for their lay-out upon the application of simple geometric principles, which the craftsmen are likely to have learnt by heart. The octagon-pattern can be laid out on the basis of a series of steps from an underlying grid.¹⁴ In the process of variation and elaboration of the basic schemata workshops could develop their own

¹² Figured motifs may also be used as filling elements (for instance in (e)); these are omitted in the drawings.

¹³ Above, ch.17, section II, n.15.



300 (cont.)

favoured repertory. This process could lead on a large scale to the appearance of styles characteristic of a broad region. Examples include the 'multiple decor' designs most characteristic of southern Gaul and the Rhône valley, where the subdivisions of a grid can themselves contain miniature geometric covering compositions (figures 75, 77);¹⁵ or the Floral Style of the African provinces where the framework of a geometric schema is 'vegetalised', as seen in the examples of figure 301.¹⁶ Individual combinations of compositions and motifs may be much more locally specific, and allow the work of local workshops to be identified. For instance, Suzanne Gozlan has traced the evolution of several rare border-patterns used in the region of Africa Proconsularis around Thysdrus and Acholla, and shown how it is possible to chart the variations in the way the craftsmen treat the different elements.¹⁷

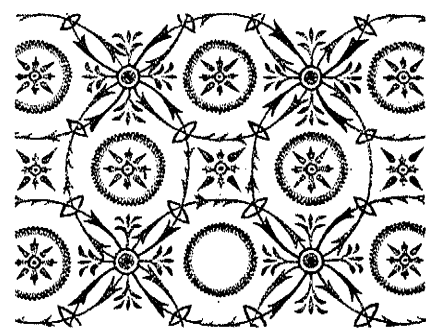
¹⁵ Ch.5, ns.6-7, 9; the type is found also in other regions, including Tripolitania and Cyprus.

¹⁶ *Décor* 246i (Thysdrus); 240e (Acholla); 242d (Thuburbo Maius); 242c (Thysdrus); 231c (Themetra); 151g (Carthage); references in *Décor*. Cf. ch.7, section II, ns.13-14.

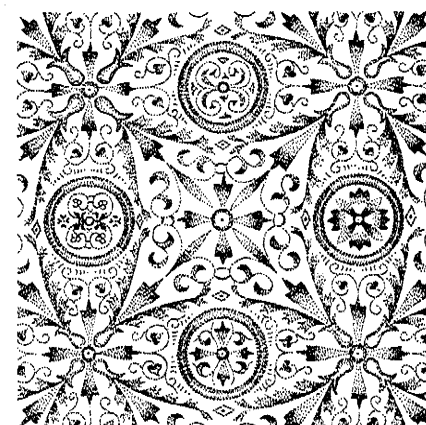
A new taste, with a range of new motifs, appeared on the ornamental mosaics of late antiquity. It is especially characteristic of the eastern provinces, and several aspects were discussed above in chapters 10 and 11.¹⁸ Its most typical products are the designs of interlace, where looped bands form a repetitive carpet-like design (for example 208). Here too the underlying schema is often one of the basic patterns that had been in use for centuries, but the rendering produces a very different effect. The bands can be formed by traditional motifs such as guilloche or wavy ribbon, but most frequently they are of rainbow cable. They may contain ornamental motifs, floral motifs, or figures in the medallions that they form between them, but in the most extreme forms of the style the complex looped patterns are themselves sufficient ornament. Figure 302 gives characteristic examples, simple and complex; the majority come from the Near East, but (d)

¹⁷ S. Gozlan, 'Deux motifs de bordures sur des mosaïques de Byzacène', *Karthago* 17, 1976, 153-84, pls.xiii-xx; Gozlan, 'Quelques décors ornementaux de la mosaïque africaine', *MEFRA* 102, 1990, 983-1029; and cf. above, ch.7, n.18.

¹⁸ Ch.10, section IV; ch.11, section III.



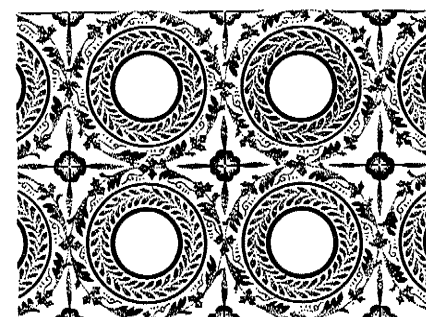
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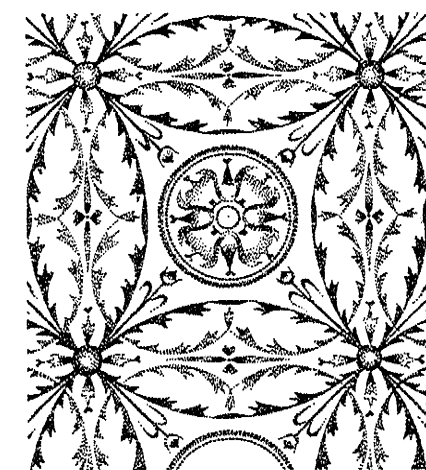
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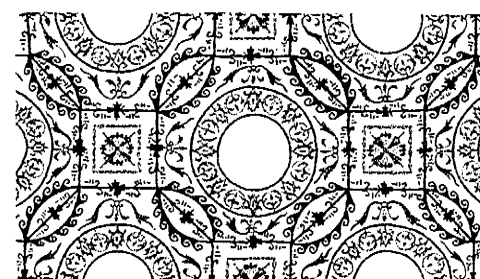
B



E



C



F

301 Selection of Floral Style patterns from Africa Proconsularis (for sources see note 16).

and (e), from Ravenna, show the adoption of the new style also in Italy.¹⁹

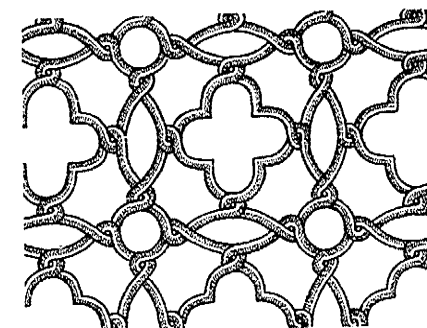
II Floral-vegetal designs

Many decorative designs are based, in part or whole, on the forms of plants or flowers. These ranged from formal friezes of palmettes which the artists of the early pebble mosaics adapted from the repertory of ornament in archi-

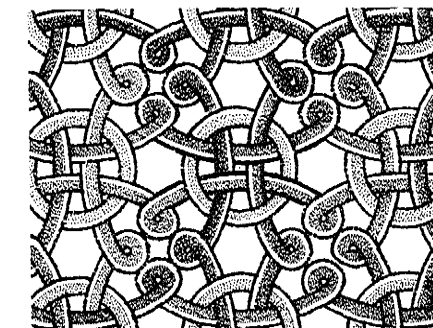
tecture and vase-painting, as in the border of the Dionysus mosaic from the Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos (figure 5), to the naturalistic Hellenistic garlands of fruit and flowers found at Pergamon and Pompeii (figures 28, 43).²⁰ On several distinctive north African mosaics branches of fruit and flowers are repre-

¹⁹ *Décor* 149g (Tiberias, Israel); 246f (El Muharrafa, Israel); 235a (Antioch); 244d (Ravenna); 244e (Ravenna); 235c (Ghiné, Lebanon); references in *Décor*.

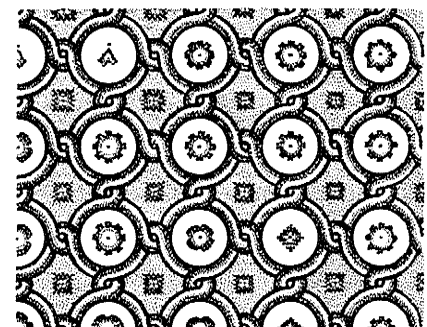
²⁰ Olynthos: ch.1, n.15; Pergamon: ch.2, n.31; Pompeii: ch.3, n.25.



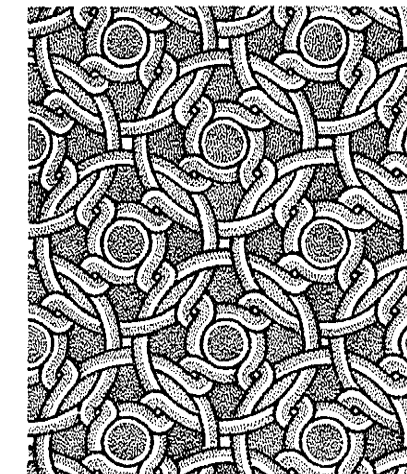
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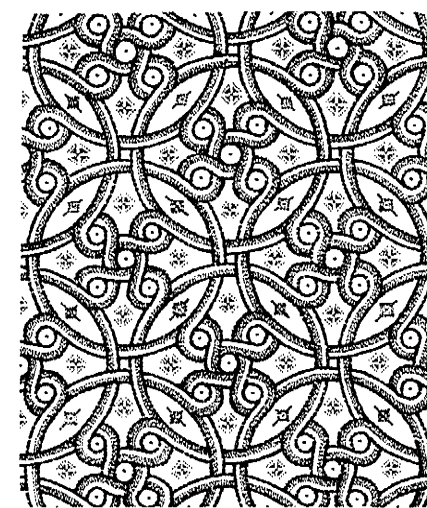
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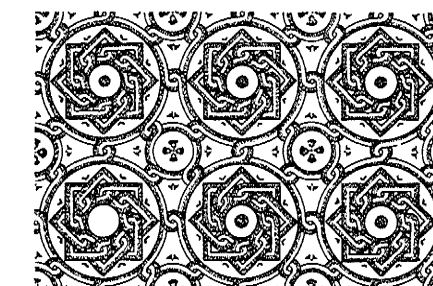
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D



E



F

302 Selection of looped patterns from late antiquity (for sources see note 19)

sented as if strewn at random over the floor (see also figure 119);²¹ dense vegetal carpets or individual fruit-trees cover several floors of the late antique period in Aquitania (figure 86);²² repetitive trellises and imbrications of rosebuds characterise late antique mosaics in the east (figures 190, 191, 206, 212).²³ A geometric schema may be 'vegetalised', as in the Floral Style, by tracing its outline in fine tendrils or rows of petals; laurel wreaths may be used as borders, to trace the schema or to frame the motifs; rosettes may fill the compartments of a design.²⁴

One of the commonest of all vegetal designs was the rinceau or running scroll. It may be clearly identified as vine, ivy, or acanthus, or be more generic, sometimes an artificial composite of several species. It originated as a

²¹ Ch.7, n.27.

²² Ch.5, ns.25-7.

²³ Ch.10, ns.34-6; ch.11, ns.15, 19.

²⁴ Floral style: above, n.16. For the rosettes characteristic of Vienne and the Rhône valley, cf. J. Lancha, 'Florilège viennois', in *Hommages Stern*, 245-51, pls.CLIII-CLXIX.

border motif closely related to similar designs used in architectural ornament and in vase-painting, and continued to be used as a border throughout the entire period. It could also spread more freely over the surface of the floor, filling it with its volutes or forming regular, symmetrical medallions. Again there is a wide range of variation in the rendering of the scrolls. Formal patterns frame pebble mosaics at Olynthos (figure 4), a spiralling three-dimensional but artificial plant forms the border of the Pella stag-hunt (figure 13), superb naturalism distinguishes the mosaic signed by Hephaistion at Pergamon.²⁵ On many black-and-white mosaics the scrolls are reduced to linear near-geometric minimalism, while thick bushy growths of luxuriant acanthus appear in many polychrome versions.²⁶ Here too the workshops developed their own favoured method of treating a standard design, so that a typical scroll in Carthage differs from one in south-west Britain, or a Spanish version from one in the eastern Mediterranean. Often the scrolls are inhabited, either naturalistically by insects or little birds, or by figures conventionally framed in their curls or growing out of the floral corollas; these may be animals, birds, or human figures or Eroses, often shown as hunters with their prey. Characteristic especially of Syria, Palestine and Transjordan in the fifth and sixth centuries are the scrolls which cover the whole pavement with regular, symmetrical medallions, often filled not just with individual figures but also with complete little scenes, often of genre (figures 210, 211).²⁷ And an exceptionally fine example, very naturalistic in detail, frames the mosaic of the Peristyle of the Great Palace at Constantinople (figure 244).²⁸

III Figured scenes

The mosaicists drew on a figured repertory which was wide and varied and very diverse in source. Some themes rose and fell in popularity, others remained remarkably constant for many centuries. There can be no question here of offering any comprehensive survey, but only a

summary of some of the main categories of material found on the mosaics.

At all times, in all contexts and in every sort of compositional scheme, extensive use was made of representations of animals, birds, and marine creatures. They provided a source of enormously varied decoration, which could be used alone or in combinations, in friezes or bands, or to fill the compartments of a geometric composition. Groups of animals could be shown fighting one another or processing peacefully. Mythical creatures such as sea monsters or griffins appear alongside real ones. In Hellenistic mosaics the creatures often form by themselves the subject of an *emblema*, treated with remarkable naturalism and careful observation: for example the *emblemata* of fish and marine life from Pompeii, or the Drinking Doves from Hadrian's Villa²⁹ (figures 46, 27). At the other extreme schematic forms of fish or birds may be repeated endlessly in medallions over an entire floor, as on many early Byzantine church mosaics.

Animals, birds and fish, sometimes dead or ready to be prepared for cooking, also appear in combination with edible items such as baskets of fruit or vegetables. The origin of the theme lies in the representations of guest-gifts or *xenia* that a host might offer his guests, and *emblemata*, mostly in Italy, portray such offerings in a manner resembling a modern still-life. Later these tended to be broken down into individual motifs, and a variety of inanimate objects scattered through the compartments of a geometric composition.³⁰

Classical mythology provided an inexhaustible storehouse of material on which the mosaicists drew throughout the whole of antiquity. Two general groupings may be distinguished. On the one hand divinities are often represented, alone or with their followers, with little narrative content. Dionysus is far the most popular; after him come Poseidon/Neptune and other marine deities, and Aphrodite/Venus. Secondly there are the scenes of mythological narrative. These usually take the form of a single central episode which serves to sum up the entire story: Bellerophon, mounted on Pegasus, attacks the Chimaera;

means of studying some early Byzantine mentalities', *Byzantion* 48, 1978, 10–34; also above, ch.11, ns.20, 24–6.

²⁸ Ch.13, section III.

²⁹ Ch.3, n.30; ch.2, n.30.

³⁰ Cf. C. Balmelle et al., *Recherches franco-tunisiennes sur la mosaïque de l'Afrique antique 1, Xenia* (CEFR 125, Rome 1990). The *asarotos oikos* of Sosos of Pergamon also gave rise to a certain number of copies or adaptations representing the debris of a meal scattered over the pavement: above, ch.2, n.27.

Theseus defeats the Minotaur; Achilles, hidden among the maidens on Skyros, betrays himself by clutching the weapons brought by Odysseus and Diomedes. Very rarely is there any attempt to tell a story in successive episodes; at the most, several scenes related to the same hero may be combined, for instance a series of episodes from the life of Achilles. Roman myth is represented by the Wolf and Twins, the most familiar symbol of Rome, while Aeneas appears only very seldom.³¹

The diffusion of such scenes over the whole width of the Roman Empire demonstrates the adoption of at least a superficial veneer of classical culture. The owner of a scene of Bellerophon (and the mosaicist who executed it) may well have known nothing more about the hero except that he killed the Chimaera, but that knowledge was a basic constituent of educated life in provinces of utterly different traditions. In contrast there is an almost total absence of religious figures or mythological scenes which have a local origin in the region concerned. There are no clearly recognisable Celtic deities on mosaics in Britain or Gaul, for instance, whereas sculpture offers numerous examples. The very few representations of Egyptian deities on mosaics come not from Egypt itself but from Italy, and belong to the fashion there for Egyptianising scenes.³² Mosaic was evidently tied inseparably to the Graeco-Roman tradition in which the medium originated; neither those who executed nor those who commissioned mosaics appear to have felt impelled to use them in the service of any of the multifarious local traditions of the empire.³³ Mythological themes continued to be represented on mosaics as late as the sixth century AD, long after the Christianisation of the Empire: at Madaba in Jordan there are Hippolytus and Phaedra and Aphrodite and Adonis (figure 213), at Argos in Greece a Dionysiac *thiasos* (figure 234), and even the mosaic of the Great Palace at Constantinople itself has Bellerophon and

a satyr.³⁴ However some mosaics from the late Empire show signs of the disintegration of the tradition, where the mosaicist is no longer familiar either with the traditional way of representing a scene, or apparently with the details of the story.³⁵

Some scenes are more directly inspired by works of literature and imply a more extensive acquaintance with the story. The clearest examples are scenes from the theatre, which are sometimes identified explicitly as representing a specific play; above all the Menander scenes from the House of Menander at Mytilene, where the characters and even the act are named³⁶ (figures 229, 230). Rarer sources such as the Greek novels have inspired a few illustrations at Antioch, which also needed inscriptions to identify the characters.³⁷ More often, however, the allusion to literary culture is conveyed through portraits of poets or philosophers, or simply through the figures of the Muses.

Recognisable historical subjects, Greek or Roman, are very rare indeed. The outstanding exception is the Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun at Pompeii, which remains unique. The great themes of official Roman state art, known to us largely through relief sculpture but undoubtedly current also in painting, had almost no reflection on mosaic pavements; there are no battles of Romans against barbarians, nor scenes of Imperial deeds or ceremonies. The explanation lies in part in the fact that mosaic was most often used in private contexts, where the official state themes had no immediate relevance. But there was also an evident sense that certain themes were not fitting to be used on the floor: if more wall decoration in mosaic had survived, the picture might be different.³⁸

On the other hand, certain types of subject from contemporary life were widely adopted, including some that had at least a semi-public character. The world of entertainment and the games provided a rich source of

to their identification with local gods, but there is no trace of this syncretism in their form on mosaics.

³⁴ Madaba: ch.11, n.29; Argos: ch.12, n.37; Constantinople: ch.13, n.31.

³⁵ Cf. above, ch.7, n.69; ch.9, n.42.

³⁶ Above, ch.12, n.26; below, section IV, n.51.

³⁷ Ch.10, n.6.

³⁸ Thus the mural *opus sectile* of the Basilica of Junius Bassus in Rome shows a magistrate in the circus, a theme of official art (above, ch.15, n.44). Similarly a passage in the *Historia Augusta* describes a mosaic (*musivum* – evidently on a wall) showing the short-lived Emperor Pescennius Niger represented among the friends of Commodus taking part in the rites of Isis (*SHA Pesc.Nig.6.8*); although the source is not reliable, the description must at least have sounded plausible.

²⁵ Ch.1, ns.15, 25, and cf. ns.28–30; ch.2, n.32.

²⁶ On Hellenistic scrolls, cf. G. Sauron, 'Notes sur la diffusion de frises de mosaïques hellénistiques à décor de rinceaux', *MEFRA* 90, 1978, 727–33; for Roman scrolls in general, the classic article of J.M.C. Toynbee, J.B. Ward Perkins, 'Peopled scrolls: a Hellenistic motif in Imperial art', *BSR* 18, 1950, 2–43.

²⁷ See C. Dauphin, 'Byzantine Pattern Books: a re-examination of the problem in the light of the "inhabited scroll"', *Art History* 1, 1978, 400–23; Dauphin, 'Symbolic or decorative? The inhabited scroll as a

³¹ Wolf and Twins: cf. C. Dulière, *Lupa Romana. Recherches d'iconographie et essai d'interprétation* (Brussels–Rome 1979), I, 116–17; II, 54–7 nos.139–47. Aeneas: *LIMC* I (1981), p.391, s.v. Aineias 158–160 (F. Canciani).

³² Cf. M. de Vos, *L'Egittomania in pittura e mosaici romano-campani della prima età imperiale* (Leiden 1980), 25–35.

³³ See J. Balty, 'Iconographie classique et identités régionales: les mosaïques romaines de Syrie', in L. Kahil, C. Augé, P. Linant de Bellefonds eds., *Iconographie classique et identités régionales* (BCH suppl.14, 1986), 395–406. There are occasional examples in the east of representations of what appear to be local legends, though treated in a purely hellenising style: see for example above ch.10, ns.18, 23; ch.13, n.26. Elsewhere it is sometimes suggested that the popularity of representations of various divinities in particular provinces may be due

material. Some of this – scenes of athletes or the theatre – had formed part of the traditional repertory of Greek art; but those which dealt with the Roman institutions of amphitheatre and circus required something new. They were not of course confined to mosaics, and the motifs used for them could become through repetition as conventional as any others; but a degree of reference to the contemporary world was intrinsic. Scenes of hunting or rural activities, though they could be treated as generic and timeless, might also be presented as excerpts from the contemporary world, with 'realistic' details, for instance of dress. Other subjects which were taken originally from the real world, however conventional they might be in form, include representations of buildings, especially the great estates of landed proprietors; ships and the world of the sea; and the occasional domestic scene. In some of these scenes the actors are identified by name or given other characteristics that suggest a reference to actual individuals or events.³⁹ True portraits are rare, apart from the well-known *emblema* from Pompeii with the portrait of a woman (plate 8); but the representations of the deceased on tomb mosaics and of donors on some mosaics of Christian churches are clearly meant to refer to specific individuals, though the rendering is often schematic⁴⁰ (see also figures 209, 318).

Allegory also provided a source of subject-matter. Occasionally this could be very complicated, as in the great cosmological mosaic at Emerita (Mérida) or some of those at Antioch and other eastern centres. More often it was straightforward, with a single figure serving as the personification of a desirable quality and identified either by attributes or by an inscription.⁴¹ Divisions of time such as the Seasons and the Months were very popular and were most often represented by personifications, though for calendars of the months scenes of agricultural activities or religious festivals could also be used.⁴² One reason for the popularity of such subjects was undoubtedly that they offered convenient series of figures which could be used to fill the compartments formed by the typical compositional schemata.

A few religions not of traditional Graeco-Roman origin did make use of mosaic in their shrines. A number of

Mithraea at Ostia were decorated with mosaics on which were displayed the symbols of the cult or allusions to Mithraic doctrine or ritual (figure 66). It is noteworthy that these are black-and-white mosaics, a style more flexible and more easily adapted to the creation of new motifs than polychrome.⁴³ After the triumph of Christianity the demand for the construction and embellishment of large numbers of Christian churches made it necessary to devise suitable systems of decoration for their floors. This was at first a tentative process, with adaptation of motifs and designs used previously in secular contexts and only gradual introduction of specifically Christian themes. In the same period some Jewish synagogues were decorated with mosaics, probably in imitation of their use in Christian churches. In the churches only very limited use is made of biblical subjects or of representations of Christ and the saints, in contrast to the extensive use of such subjects in the wall mosaics of the period. On the pavement subjects related to those of the secular repertory were preferred, though they might be combined in ways that allowed a symbolic Christian interpretation.⁴⁴

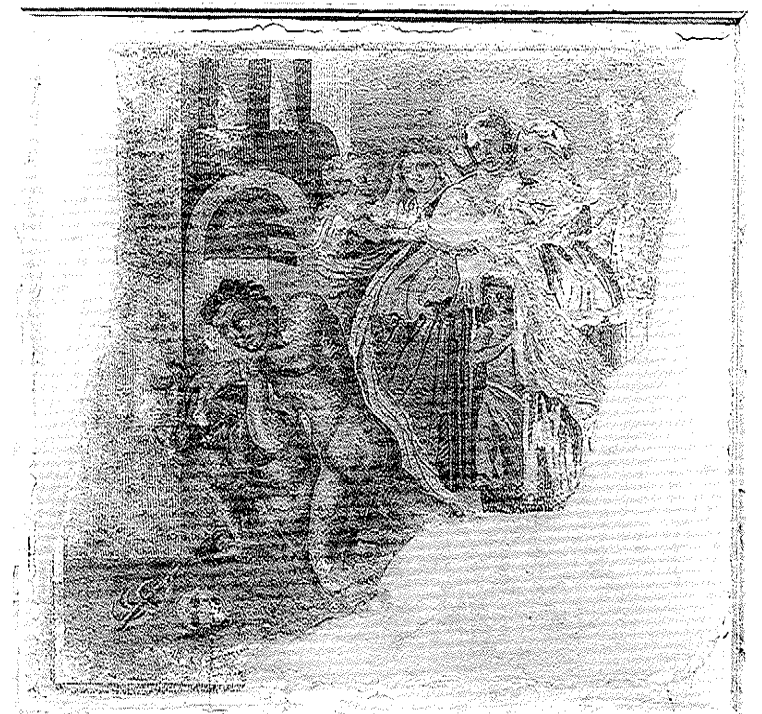
IV Transmission of motifs

Very little of this figured repertory was exclusive to mosaics. The mosaicists had to work out their own solutions to the problems of adapting a figured scene, or a combination of figured scenes, to the surface of a floor; but parallels for the scenes and motifs themselves can be found very widely in other media of Roman art, in painting, relief sculpture (especially the decoration of sarcophagi), metal work, textiles, glass, or relief decoration on pottery. The question of the means by which motifs were transmitted therefore goes beyond the medium of mosaics alone, and raises problems fundamental to the study of Roman art as a whole and of the methods of work of the craftsmen.

Some mosaics were undoubtedly based on famous paintings which they copied more or less closely; the Alexander Mosaic is the most obvious example. For these

we have to assume that one or more drawings of the original served as intermediary, to convey knowledge of the painting to the craftsmen making the mosaic. Mosaics could also of course copy other mosaics, as was presumably the case with the versions of the Doves of Sosos. But although there are many examples of mosaics which have very similar themes, only rarely do we find the sort of correspondence which would indicate that they were intended as exact copies of famous originals, or indeed of one another; almost always there are variations. Thus four *emblemata* from central and southern Italy show the scene of Theseus and the Minotaur with the two adversaries locked in combat, in a form which clearly reproduces a common original, presumably a painting. On three, from Mola di Gaeta (figure 303), Chieti (figure 304), and the House of the Labyrinth at Pompeii (figure 40), the main figures correspond very closely, though there are variations in the minor bystanders and in the background; the fourth, also from Pompeii, is a very simplified version which nevertheless reproduces the pair of combatants, perhaps copied directly from the version in the House of the Labyrinth. Other versions of the same subject, however, of which at least twenty-six examples are known, follow a different basic scheme, and do not go back to the same original.⁴⁵

Much more common than the repetition of whole scenes in a pictorial format is the repetition of individual figures and groups. After the Hellenistic period most figured mosaics, especially in the western part of the empire, were composed of groups of figures at best loosely combined with a landscape or architectural setting. A traditional scene such as Achilles on Skyros consists of an essential central group: Achilles seizing the weapons, Deidameia trying to hold him back, Odysseus/Ulysses seizing hold of him. Depending on the scale and lavishness of the work, and the mosaicist's competence, further figures may be added: the other daughters of Lykomedes, Diomedes accompanying Odysseus, the trumpeter blowing his instrument. The architectural background and other details can be added or omitted at will. These variations on a familiar theme occur over many centuries and the length and breadth of the empire. At least ten versions of Achilles on Skyros, for instance, are found on mosaics, from Pompeii in the first century AD (figure 260) to Thysdrus and Palmyra in the third, Tipasa in Mauretania and Pedrosa de la Vega in northern Hispania Tarraconensis in the fourth (figure 161). Related versions are found in other media: paintings, mainly at



303 Mola di Gaeta, *emblema* with Theseus and Minotaur. Museo Archeologico Nazionale 10017, Naples. 0.75 m × 0.715 m. First century BC.

Pompeii; sarcophagi, mainly of the third century; or metal ware of the fourth.⁴⁶

None of these versions are identical. Scale and composition vary widely; individual features are rendered in the style appropriate to the time and place where they are made; there is a great deal of latitude over details. However they share the use of certain basic schemata for the figures. These can be varied in detail, or divided into subgroups: Achilles' arm is raised with the shield or lowered to lift it off the ground, he lunges to left or right, he is still fully dressed in women's clothing, or it has slipped off to expose all his nude body except one leg. But the variations recur, so that an identical pose can be found in two examples that are otherwise very different. Even more striking is the way that minor details can be repeated; the trumpeter, for instance, with his trumpet horizontal across the background, or a daughter of Lykomedes seen in rear view.⁴⁷

The phenomenon just discussed is characteristic of Roman artisan work in every medium. The standard

⁴⁵ W.A. Daszewski, *La Mosaïque de Thésée* (Nea Paphos 11, Warsaw 1977), 49–50, 79–81, pls.33–4; Strocka, *Cdellab* 99–100, pls.269–73.

⁴⁶ Cf. *LIMC* 1 (1981), pp.58–69, s.v. Achilleus 105–75, esp.117–27 for mosaics (A. Kossatz-Deissmann).

⁴⁷ *LIMC* 1 (1981), pp.308–11, s.v. Agyrtes (P. Linant de Bellefonds), for the trumpeter.

³⁹ See below, ch.20, section 11.

⁴⁰ Pompeii: ch.3, n.34. Tomb mosaics: ch.10, ns.24–6, and N. Duval, *La mosaïque funéraire dans l'art paléochrétien* (Ravenna 1976), esp.62. Donors: ch.11, n.23; below, ch.20, n.39.

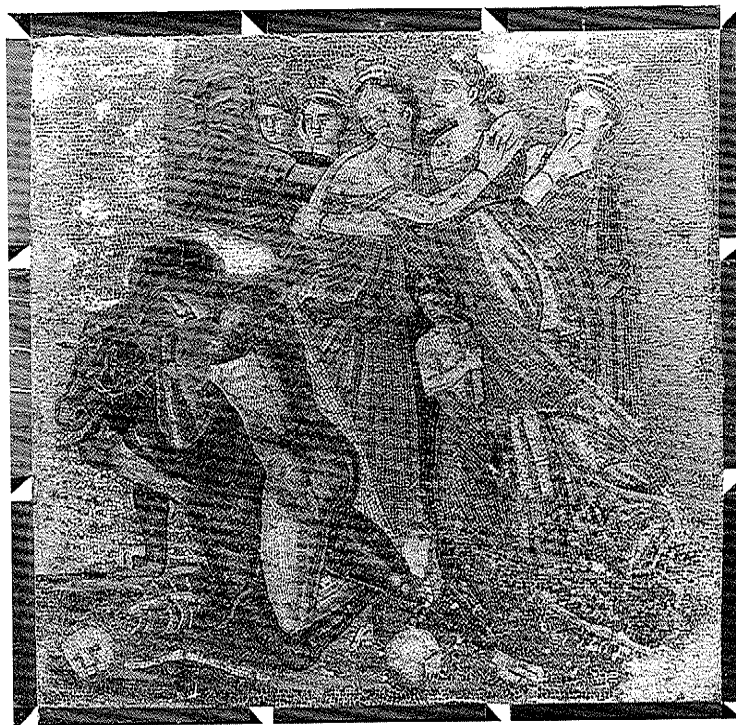
⁴¹ Emerita: ch.9, ns.15–22. East: ch.10, ns.16, 33.

⁴² Calendars: H. Stern, 'Les calendriers romains illustrés', *ANRW* 11.12.2

(1981), 431–75. Seasons: Parrish, *Season Mosaics*; R. Ling, 'The Seasons in Romano-British Mosaic Pavements', *Britannia* 14, 1983, 13–22.

⁴³ Above, ch.4, ns.28–9.

⁴⁴ Cf. ch.11, sections 11–111.



304 Chieti, *emblema* with Theseus and Minotaur, based on same original as 303. Museo Archeologico Nazionale 10018, Naples. 0.425 m square. First century BC.

repertory is composed of schemata on the basis of which figures, groups and scenes can be constructed. The use of such figural schemata was not confined to mythological scenes; once subjects from the amphitheatre or circus became common a further range of schemata was used for subjects such as combats between *venatores* and beasts, or charioteers advancing in victory. The craftsmen's role was to combine, to vary, and to embellish these schemata, and to distribute them over the surface to be decorated, but seldom to invent completely afresh.

It remains to be examined how these designs and schemes could be transmitted among the craftsmen, and especially how a similar group could be repeated over a period of centuries, and at a distance of hundreds of miles. It is on this point that controversy has concentrated. The basic question concerns the existence or not of model-books, understood in the sense of a repertory of designs which circulated among the workshops and conveyed the basic schemes for the craftsmen to copy. The

existence of such books has been taken as self-evident or has been hotly denied.⁴⁸ I believe that some of the repetition of motifs noted above can be accounted for in other ways, but that nevertheless collections of models or patterns in some form must have existed.

Much can be explained as the result of the training of the apprentice craftsman. Just as the apprentice would have learnt the schemata which underlay the ornamental repertory of the workshop, so he must have learnt formulae or schemata which enabled him, first to construct individual figures in convincing action, then to compose specific scenes. If one set way could be learnt of drawing scenes likely to be in demand, whether Achilles on Skyros or a *venator* and his prey, then once the craftsman had learnt it he could repeat it whenever called for. The visual memory of the craftsmen is likely to have been very well developed, since they depended on it for their livelihood from an early age. In this way the figured repertory could be passed down from one generation to the next, preserved almost unchanged by the craftsmen's conservatism. The geographical diffusion may be explained by assuming that mosaicists migrated, carrying in their heads the repertory of themes and motifs they had learnt and passing them on to their new pupils.

This is likely to be part of the explanation, but not, I believe, the whole. Some repeated details – often quite minor ones like the trumpeters in the scenes of Achilles on Skyros – seem too close to be explained simply as the result of workshop training, and some subjects are too rare and widely scattered for it to be conceivable that they were disseminated as part of the standard repertory that passed from workshop to workshop with the craftsmen themselves.⁴⁹ In cases such as these it seems that the craftsmen must have drawn on some type of model- or copy-book which gave the outline of figures and groups, probably in very schematic form which left a great deal of latitude for the execution of details and for the manner of combining them.

Among the media which have been suggested in the past as providing the means of transmission are illus-

trated manuscripts. It has been proposed that papyrus rolls or codices with cycles of illustrations, accompanying either literary texts or mythological handbooks, circulated and were used as a source by the craftsmen. However, surviving fragments of illustrated texts which are earlier than the appearance of the luxurious illustrated codices of the fourth century AD do not show the type of illustration that is postulated, and there are strong practical arguments against this theory. Illustrated manuscripts were expensive luxury items, and it is most unlikely that a mosaic workshop could own a stock sufficient to supply the range of iconography needed. It may occasionally have happened that the proud owner of such a manuscript requested a reproduction of a particular scene, but manuscripts can hardly have been readily available to be handled in the dirty conditions of a mosaic workshop. Nor does the sort of repetition that is found in most scenes – the concentration on a single central episode – fit the suggestion that the model consisted of cycles of illustrations of narrative texts.⁵⁰

One particular case needs more detailed examination. The mosaics from the House of Menander in Mytilene, discussed in chapter 12, show a series of scenes identified as the plays of Menander, together with a portrait of the poet (figures 228, 229, 230). Two of these, the *Synaristosai* and the *Theophoroumene*, have permitted the identification of the same two scenes on the *emblemata* signed by Dioskourides of Samos at Pompeii some four centuries earlier (figures 44, 45). The *Synaristosai* panel at Mytilene reproduces exactly the same scene as Dioskourides but in mirror reversal, and details such as costumes and masks are up-dated. The relationship of the two *Theophoroumene* scenes is more complex: one of the actors is repeated (not reversed), the two others are different, and the dwarf attendant is moved from one side to the other. On the other hand a painting at Stabiae exactly repeats Dioskourides' mosaic, and terracotta statuettes from Myrina, probably of the second century BC,

represent its two central figures. It is clear that there existed a famous series of scenes from Menander, widely copied, whole or in part, in a range of media. It has been convincingly argued that the archetypes must have been full-scale paintings from the early Hellenistic period, and cannot have been manuscript illustrations. Nor is their transmission likely to have been through illustrated texts, in view of such features as the independent copying of selected figures, their appearance in slightly different combinations, and the occurrence of mirror reversals both for entire scenes and for individual figures. Whatever the medium of transmission, it must have presented individual figures and groups more often than complete scenes, and been in a form which permitted reversal.⁵¹

No fragment of a copy-book has survived from antiquity, not surprisingly since they would have been made of perishable materials. What form they might have taken and how widely they were distributed appear to be unanswerable questions. But it should be stressed that the assumption of their existence does not imply exact mechanical copying by the craftsmen; on the contrary, they clearly had considerable latitude in handling whatever models they used. Nor is the use of copy-books incompatible with the use of preliminary drawings or cartoons for the individual mosaics, the evidence for which was discussed in the previous chapter; these would have been necessary to determine the lay-out of the scene or scenes on the floor, regardless of the source of the figures or groups that composed it. Moreover it would certainly be wrong to assume that the craftsmen were dependent on any one type of source for their designs. The most highly skilled craftsmen are likely to have drawn on all that was available to them: on their memories and training, on copy-books, and on works that they had themselves seen, in the same medium or in others. They would have used these ingredients, moreover, to create a design that was essentially new.

⁴⁸ Ph. Bruneau, 'Les mosaïstes antiques avaient-ils des cahiers de modèles?', *RA* 1984, 2, 241–72, concludes firmly in the negative, but his arguments do not seem to me convincing. He claims that the only correspondences that exist between mosaics of the same subject are those which can be ascribed just to the theme itself, but the examples he quotes in support of this conclusion are too arbitrarily selected, nor does he look at the question outside mosaics. For the problem in other media cf. F. Gorm Andersen, 'Pompeian painting. Some practical aspects of creation', *ARID* 14, 1985, 113–28; R. Ling, *Roman*

Painting (Cambridge 1991), 217–20; H. Froning, 'Die ikonographische Tradition der kaiserzeitlichen mythologischen Sarkophagreliefs', *JdI* 95, 1980, 322–41.

⁴⁹ The question cannot be examined in detail here; I hope to treat it elsewhere. For a review with reference to scenes of the Triumph of Dionysus, see C. Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysus* (Ithaca/London 1995), 190–221, citing other recent studies of the problem.

⁵⁰ The classic statements of the theory that manuscript illustration was the source for the workers in other media are K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, MA, 1959); Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton 1947, 1970).

⁵¹ Cf. J.R. Green, 'Drunk again: a study in the iconography of the comic theater', *AJA* 89, 1985, 465–72; Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London/New York 1994), 111–13, 132–4, 164–5.

Architectural context and function

I

The architectural setting in which a mosaic was laid could affect the work in several ways. It imposed, obviously, physical constraints: the design had to be accommodated to the size and shape of the space to be decorated. How the craftsmen achieved this varied, depending on their objectives, on the prevailing fashions, and also on their skill. Some were content to cover with plain tesserae the space between a central decorated panel of simple shape (usually rectangular) and the edges of the room, while others produced designs that followed the curves or angles of complex plans. But there are also less concrete forms of accommodation. Mosaics might be designed to mark on the floor the patterns of use of a room: the habitual location of furniture, the division into parts serving different purposes, or the desired flow of movement. They could establish (or help to establish: there must always have been other indicators, now usually lost) a hierarchy of use between different spaces, telling the visitor visually which were grander or more public than others, and could link areas connected in function. The choice of themes for the decoration could convey a message about the function of the room, or about the significance of the activities that went on there. And they might be designed to complement visually the rest of the decoration or the architectural form of the space, which might (though it need not) imply that the design of the whole was part of a single project.

These are questions which have seldom received the systematic investigation that they need; they can only be outlined here. Architectural forms and fashions changed, and generalisations are impossible. In what follows I draw attention to some of the ways in which mosaics could be used to take account of the form and function of the space, where they were laid; and I quote some striking,

though not necessarily typical, examples. I shall not treat here the special problems raised by the mosaics of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which depend on very different architectural forms and uses.

The majority of mosaics throughout antiquity came from private houses. At their first introduction they were a sign of the growing luxury of private life in the fifth and fourth centuries BC; and despite their much greater diffusion under the Empire they never lost their identity as a mark of comfortable domestic living for a society acculturated to Graeco-Roman manners. Practical characteristics of durability and water-resistance made them suitable also for the decoration of baths, where they appear right from the start; they continued to be widely used, both in small private or semi-private baths and in the huge public establishments of the Empire. In other public buildings their use was limited. Mosaics are rarely found in temples of the state cult, nor in major civic buildings such as basilicas or *curiae* (council houses): paving with slabs of stone, of marble, or with *opus sectile* was normally considered more appropriate. Similarly, mosaics are not often found in the main buildings for public entertainment, though there are occasional examples: at Argos, for instance, the orchestra of the Odeion was paved with a mosaic showing the prizes that would be awarded to victors in the contests held there, as well as decorative motifs.¹ They were more often used in semi-public settings, and in smaller religious buildings of less conventional form. The Italian black-and-white mosaics, cheap and adaptable, are found in a wide range of buildings, including some serving commercial functions: at Ostia they decorate the porticoes and booths of the Square of the Corporations, and even some of the grander warehouses.² In some cities of the eastern empire in late antiquity the porticoes of the colonnades that lined the main streets were paved with mosaic.³ In tombs the use of

yard of the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana* (1.8.3): Ostia 4, 17, no.18, pls.XIX, XXI, XCII. See also below, n.31, for the Hall of the Measurers' Guild.

³ E.g. the Great Colonnade at Apamea, ch.10, n.41; and the Stoa of Alytarches at Ephesus, ch.13, n.10.

¹ R. Ginouvès, *Le Théâtre à gradins droits et l'Odeon d'Argos* (*Etudes péloponnésiques* 6, Paris 1972), 131–48, ascribing the mosaics of the main part of the orchestra to the second half of the second century AD.

² Square of the Corporations: ch.4, n.27. Warehouse, the central court-

mosaic could vary from a slab covering the actual grave to the entire pavement of a built tomb; the necropolis of the Isola Sacra, near Ostia, offers good examples of the range of applications.⁴ As a general rule a common decorative repertory was used which could be drawn on in very different contexts, but the mosaicists also produced designs specially adapted to particular locations and functions; examples will be discussed below.

II

Given the predominance of domestic decoration, it is there that patterns of adaptation to specific uses can be most clearly seen. Within the house mosaics might be designed deliberately to suit a particular part of the building or the function of the space where they were laid. In most houses, at all periods, the main decoration was concentrated in the areas used for reception of visitors and entertainment of guests, though the architectural forms of the buildings vary. The most clearly recognisable patterns are those used for the decoration of rooms designed for dining.⁵ In Greek buildings of the Classical period these were the square or rectangular *andrones*, where a raised platform for the couches on all four sides surrounded a decorated central area (figure 3). In Hellenistic houses the rectangular *oecus* or 'broadroom' became the main room for reception or dining. Here too an area is often marked off for the couches around the edge: occasionally it is raised above the rest of the surface, more often it is distinguished by using a less fine technique, chips around a tessellated centre, for example, or plain tesserae around an area of ornament (see also figure 306). The characteristic Roman dining-room was the *triclinium*, with couches on three sides. Here too the pavement was often designed to distinguish between a plainer area for the couches and a more highly decorated central area where the table was set, while the front part of the room was reserved for service and entertainment. In the late Republic and early Empire, at Pompeii or in elegant country villas, the central area might be occupied by an

emblema or a panel of *opus sectile* (see also figure 307). In the course of the first century AD a pattern appeared which was to be used very widely for the next two or three centuries: the T+U *triclinium* lay-out. Here the central area forms the shaft of a T, expanded into a horizontal bar at the entrance of the room, while a plainer pattern is used for the area reserved for the couches, which is shaped like a rectilinear U. This pattern, as well as a simpler U-shaped version omitting the bar of the T, is found throughout the Roman Empire, in both east and west; numerous examples have been seen throughout the first part of this book (for example figures 107, 157b, 239, 270, 296). An alternative lay-out for dining became fashionable in the later centuries of the Empire, whereby a single semi-circular couch (known as a *stibadium* or *sigma-couch*) replaced the three rectilinear couches of the *triclinium*; from the early third century onwards it too was often marked by the lay-out of the mosaics. The clearest example is the sixth-century pavement from the so-called Villa of the Falconer at Argos⁶ (figure 234).

Another room which can often be recognised from the lay-out of its mosaics is the *cubiculum* or bedroom; this might be used for relaxing during the day and for receiving small groups of friends, not just for sleeping. Here too the mosaics often mark out the setting for the couch or couches. In Italy in the first centuries BC and AD a decorated strip (called in Italian a *scendiletto* or bedside mat) often separates the inner area for the couch from the rest of the room. In the House of the Silver Wedding at Pompeii (v 2,1), for instance, two elegant *cubicula* with mosaics of the mid-first century BC open off the peristyle. The alcoves for the couches are plain, with a decorated strip, geometric in one room, vegetal in the other, in front of them. The front part of both rooms has a black-and-white geometric 'carpet', while polychrome strips, geometric or vegetal, run across the thresholds (figure 305). The distinction between the two parts is continued in the painting of the walls, and the vaulted ceilings over the alcoves.⁷ Later *cubicula* are often divided between a simple pattern in the couch-area and a more elaborate one, or a figured design, in the main part of the room. Good

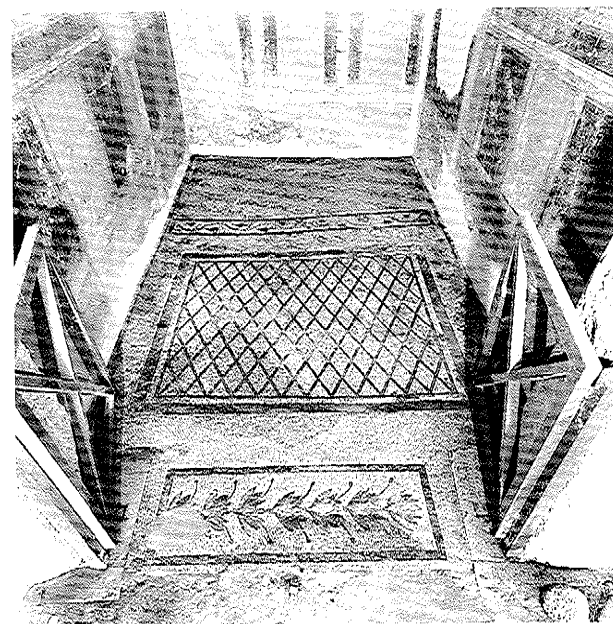
⁴ Cf. I. Bragantini, 'La decorazione a mosaico nelle tombe di età imperiale: l'esempio della necropoli dell'Isola Sacra', *CCARB* 40, 1993, 53–74; G. Calza, *La necropoli del Porto di Roma nell'Isola Sacra* (Rome 1940), 161–86. For Christian tomb mosaics and their antecedents see N. Duval, *La Mosaïque funéraire dans l'art paléochrétien* (Ravenna 1976).

⁵ For the whole development discussed in this paragraph, see K. Dunbabin, 'Triclinium and stibadium', in W. Slater ed., *Dining in a*

Classical Context (Ann Arbor 1991), 121–48; Dunbabin, 'Ut Graeco more hiberetur: Greeks and Romans on the dining couch', in I. Nielsen, H. Sigismund Nielsen eds., *Meals in a Social Context* (Aarhus 1998), 81–101.

⁶ Above, ch.12, n.37.

⁷ Rooms x and z: Pernice 50–1, pls.17.1–2; *PPM* III, 676–7, 741–2, figs.139–42, 748–51, figs.158–62.



305 Pompeii v 2.1, House of the Silver Wedding, *cubiculum* z, showing strip in front of alcove for couch (*scendiletto*), black-and-white pattern in anteroom, and threshold strip. Mid-first century BC.

examples can be seen in the Hospitalia at Hadrian's Villa at Tibur, where the three alcoves in the sides of the rooms have different patterns from the centre⁸ (figures 68, 69).

III

No other room types have so clear a system of decoration, nor correlation between lay-out and function. However in those houses that use mosaic (and other pavement types) to cover not just one or two rooms but the greater part of the floor-plan, a general hierarchy of decorative systems can often be seen. To illustrate this, I shall discuss examples of overall decoration from houses of three different types: a Hellenistic house from Delos; Campanian houses with atrium from Pompeii; and the peristyle house widespread throughout the western Mediterranean in the High Empire.

The House of the Trident in the Theatre District of Delos does not occupy an especially large ground space (though we cannot know how extensive its upper storeys may have been), but is one of the more luxuriously decorated houses on Delos, with substantial remains of wall

⁸ Above, ch.4, n.35.

⁹ J. Chamonard, *Délos 8, Le quartier du théâtre* (Paris 1922) 1, 27–9, 139–52, 171–2, pl.xiii; Bruneau, *Délos* 261–8, nos.228–36; also Bruneau, *Délos* 72–5 on the figured subjects, which Bruneau thinks have no special reference to the activities of the owner of the house. Cf. above, ch.2, n.48.

decoration. Mosaic covers the central court of the peristyle and its porticoes, as well as the main reception room or 'broadroom' and two smaller rooms adjoining it⁹ (figure 306). The court has a partly polychrome ornamental decoration; the porticoes are plain, with two small figured panels placed opposite the entrances from the street; they contain a dolphin wrapped around an anchor and a trident (figure 39). A third panel of simple ornament decorates the wing of the portico in front of the broadroom and serves to emphasise it visually for the visitor. The broadroom itself has the usual rectangular lay-out, with plain surround and series of concentric bands of ornament, red, black and white; part of the central area was more richly decorated with an area of perspective maeander in the *vermiculatum* technique. This originally framed an *emblema*, which was removed in antiquity. The two smaller rooms beside the broadroom are paved with tessellated mosaic; one has a geometric centrepiece, the other, which opens its full width onto the peristyle, has a central polychrome figured panel showing a Panathenaic amphora, a prize for victory in the horserace, accompanied by a palm and wreath of victory. Other rooms of the house have pavements of marble chips, which mark them as of lesser significance than those with tessellated mosaics. An evident hierarchy of techniques governs the distribution of the decoration, from marble chips, plain tessellation, bichrome ornamental and figured designs, to the fine polychromy which must have culminated in the lost *emblema* of the broadroom. The arrangement is used to orientate guests, to greet them at their entrance, and direct them to the main public and reception areas of the house, which are by far the most richly decorated.

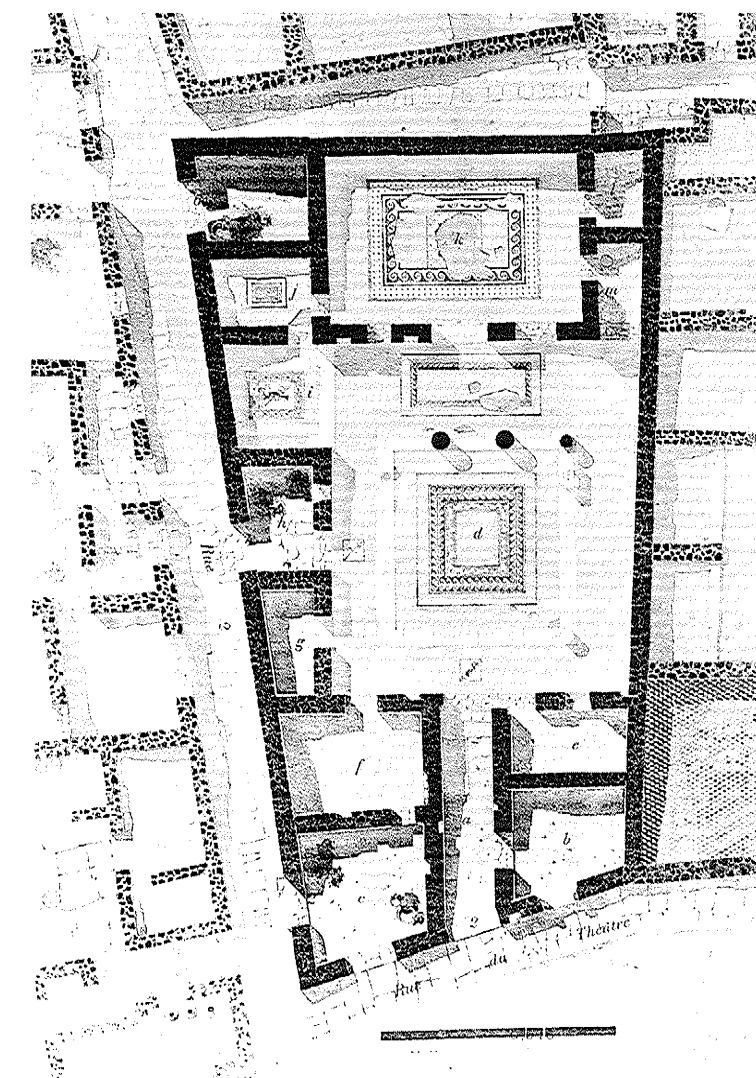
Few of the houses of Pompeii are homogeneous in their present form; in most a process of alteration, rebuilding, and redecoration went on for up to two hundred years. In many, older pavements co-exist alongside more recent ones, making it difficult to identify any overall programme of decoration. It is not uncommon for older pavements of *signinum* to be retained in the traditional core of the house, while more fashionable pavements of tessellated mosaic or *opus sectile* were laid in new dining-rooms, *cubicula*, or other areas used to entertain more select visitors. Such a distinction can be found, for instance, in the House of Meleager (vi 9,2.13), where the rooms around the atrium retained pavements of *signinum* from the first century BC, while the rooms facing the peristyle were given black-and-white mosaics in the first

century AD.¹⁰ In the wealthiest and grandest houses, especially those which have retained at least in part the decoration installed in the last hundred years of the Republic, mosaic or sectile *emblemata* or polychrome geometric mosaic decorate the rooms used for reception of select guests and the more private relaxation of their owners, while *signinum* or other forms of mortar-and-aggregate were used for the more formal and heavily used sections of the house, notably the atrium where the head of the household received the greetings of his clients. The House of the Labyrinth (vi 11,8–10), although not homogeneous in date and too complex to be discussed here in detail, gives good examples of these contrasts. The original pavements of the principal *fauces* and atrium (rooms 23, 27) are lost, but the two wings of the atrium (*alae* 31 and 32) have floors of *signinum*, dating from around 100 BC.¹¹ In the next main building phase, c.70–60 BC, floors of tessellated mosaic were laid in several of the grander rooms of the house, notably a group for entertainment and relaxation opening off the far side of the peristyle (rooms 40–6)¹² (figure 307). These include a colonnaded room of the type called a Corinthian *oecus*, used for the grandest of dinner parties, and two elegant *cubicula*, one of which contained in its front section the labyrinth mosaic with the *emblema* of Theseus and the Minotaur¹³ (figure 40). The pavements of this group range from plain to polychrome geometric mosaic, and to figured *emblemata* as a special mark of luxury; again a clear hierarchy of techniques and materials can be identified.

One house in Pompeii where a series of pavements apparently from a single building phase can be seen is the House of the Bear (vii 2,44–46).¹⁴ It is a medium-sized house occupying an irregular plot, given its present form some time in the first century AD (figure 308). Long *fauces* lead to an atrium, off which open rooms identifiable as *triclinia* and *cubicula*, with an upper storey covering several of them. The *tablinum* opens directly onto a small garden with a fountain-*nymphaeum* against its back wall.

¹⁰ Pernice 80–1; PPM iv, 660–1. Cf. also the House of the Silver Wedding (v 2.1), with *signinum* pavements in atrium and vestibule, and black-and-white mosaics in the rooms off the peristyle (above, n.7); or the smaller House of the Ceii (i 6.15), which retains in *fauces* and atrium the original black *lavapista* pavements of the second century BC, while the *tablinum* behind was transformed into a summer *triclinium* with a new pavement combining *signinum*, tessellated mosaic, and *opus sectile*, probably in the first half of the first century AD: D. Michel, *Casa dei Ceii* (i 6.15) (*Häuser in Pompeji* 3, Munich 1990), 65–6.

¹¹ Strocka, *CdelLab* 32–3, 97–100; atrium 27 retains only a coarse *signi-*



306 Delos, House of the Trident, plan. c.130–88 BC.

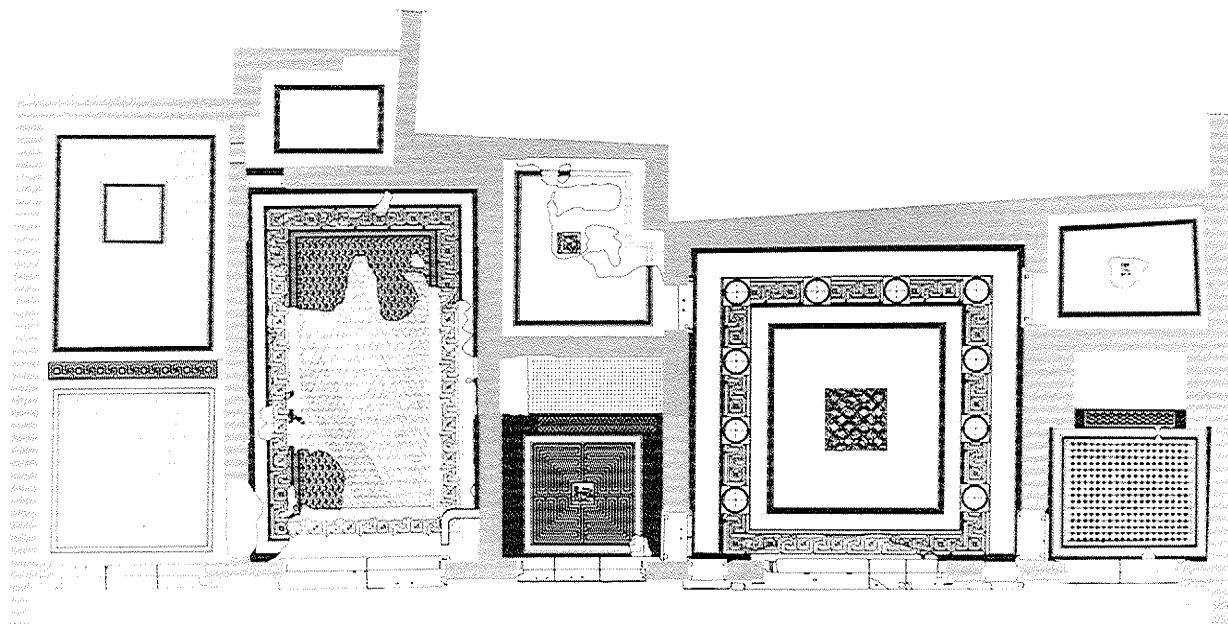
The pavements appear to have been laid in the middle of the first century, before the earthquake of AD 62. At the entrance a polychrome panel shows a wounded bear, with the inscription *HAVE*, 'welcome'. Black-and-white geometric patterns cover the *fauces* and the atrium, and the *tablinum* has a panel of marble *sectile* at the centre of black-and-white mosaic. The *triclinia* and *cubicula* also have central panels of *sectile* with frames of black-and-

num apparently belonging to the last period of the house after the earthquake of AD 62.

¹² Strocka, *CdelLab* 39–52, figs.45, 269. The Corinthian *oecus* has a *sectile emblema* at its centre, a later insertion apparently of the first century AD (*ibid.*, 123).

¹³ Above, ch.3, n.12.

¹⁴ Ehrhardt, *CdelOrso* 71, fig.47. The possibility that the building may have served as an inn or guesthouse is not relevant here, since, as Ehrhardt concludes (75–9), neither on the basis of plan nor decoration can it be distinguished from an ordinary dwelling.



307 Pompeii VI 11,8-10, House of the Labyrinth, plan of section around colonnaded oecus (Rooms 39-46). Triclinium at far left, oecus between two cubicula on right. c.70-60 BC.

white mosaic, and one has a mosaic threshold strip, while the remaining parts of the rooms are paved with *signinum*. Lavish polychrome mosaic is used for the fountain-nymphaeum in the garden, which has the usual elaborate patterns bordered with shells and framing Cupids and Gorgons' heads on the façade; in the niche Venus rides in her shell, above a band with Neptune amidst a fishy sea.¹⁵ A garden painting covers the wall around it; the rest of the house has extensive Fourth Style paintings, the majority of which are also to be placed before AD 62, though they are not all contemporary with the pavements.¹⁶

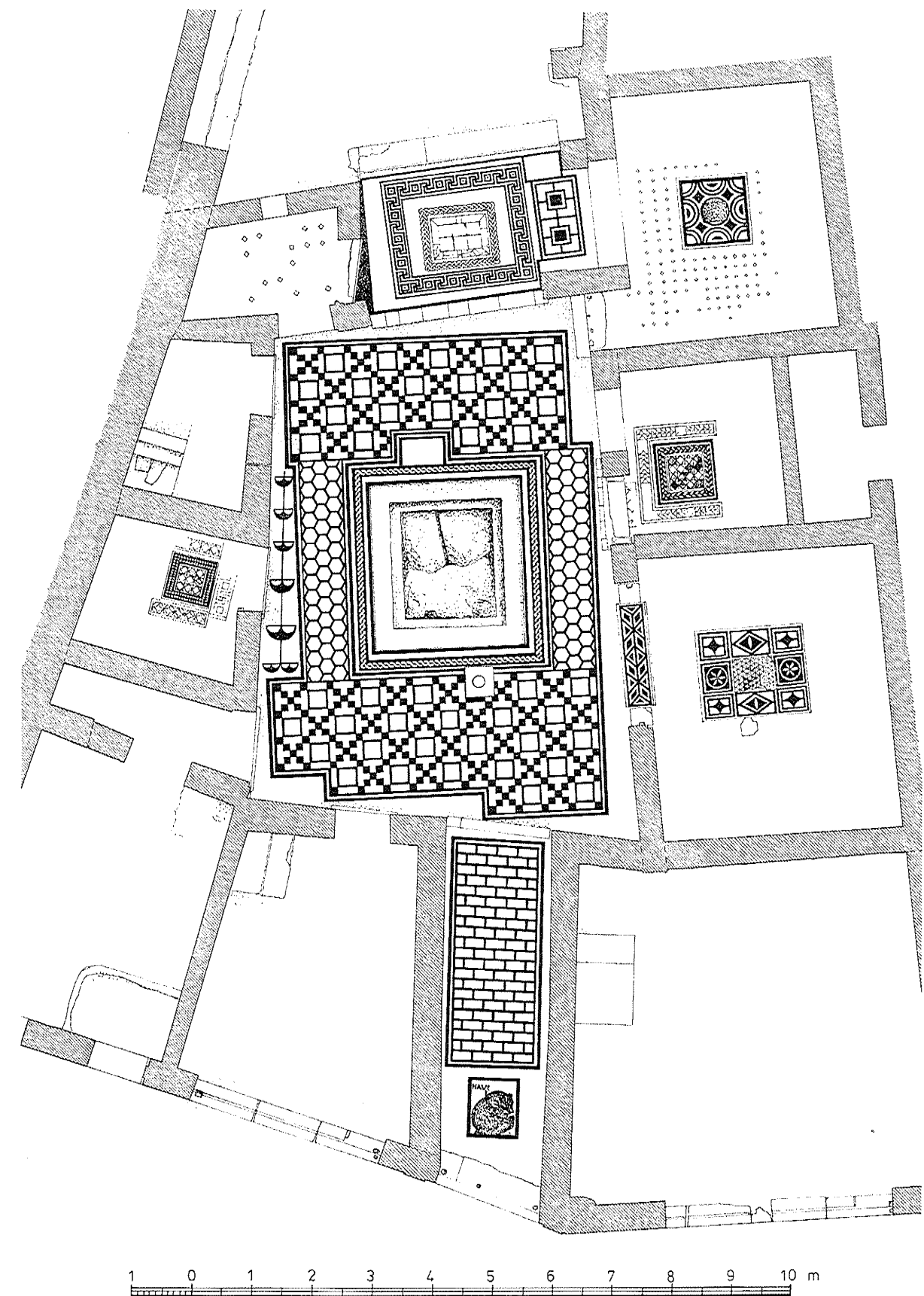
This house illustrates clearly the use of mosaic to emphasise function, as well as the measures needed to accommodate the design to an irregular groundplan. The only figured decoration on the pavements is the panel which greets visitors at the entrance. *Fauces* and atrium have all-over designs in mosaic, which are intended to give an imposing character to these areas, and as far as possible to unify the space; however the shape of the atrium, with only narrow space available on either side of the *impluvium*, necessitated the use of two different patterns and considerable adjustment at the edges. In other rooms there is a clear hierarchy of techniques, with *signinum* used for the areas which might be expected to be

covered by furniture, and the centrepieces emphasised by repeated borders in different techniques, including strips of decorative patterns in the *signinum*. The austerity of the black-and-white mosaic serves effectively to set off both the coloured (and expensive) marbles of the sectile panels and the painted walls. The *nymphaeum*-fountain, so placed that it could be seen from the entrance if all intervening doors were open, is evidently conceived as an ornamental focus, enlivening the small courtyard and offering insinuations of space and luxury far surpassing the reality. The house is by no means one of the most wealthy in Pompeii; but the decoration effectively conveys pretensions of grandeur.

From the second century AD onwards the characteristic wealthy town house of the Mediterranean world was the peristyle house, whose centre was a peristyle court often containing a garden, and with a series of rooms opening off it. The main reception room normally dominates it, often on its main axis. There may be additional smaller or more secluded courts, with further rooms opening off them. Houses of this type occur in most of the regions studied in this book, except the north-western provinces and Britain, but are especially common in the western provinces, above all in Africa and Spain. Mosaics are frequently used very extensively in such houses, covering a large proportion of the floors. Elaborate figurative or floral designs are usually reserved for a small number of rooms opening off the peristyle or the smaller courts; the

¹⁵ Ehrhardt, *Cdell'Orso* 52-3, figs.220-1, 230-2; Scar 77 no.38, pl.22.2; Jashemski, *Gardens* II, 175, no.330, fig.210; 360, no.69. Cf. ch.14, ns.22-6.

¹⁶ For the building history and phases cf. Ehrhardt, *Cdell'Orso* 57-71.



308 Pompeii VII 2,44-46, House of the Bear, plan. Mid-first century AD.

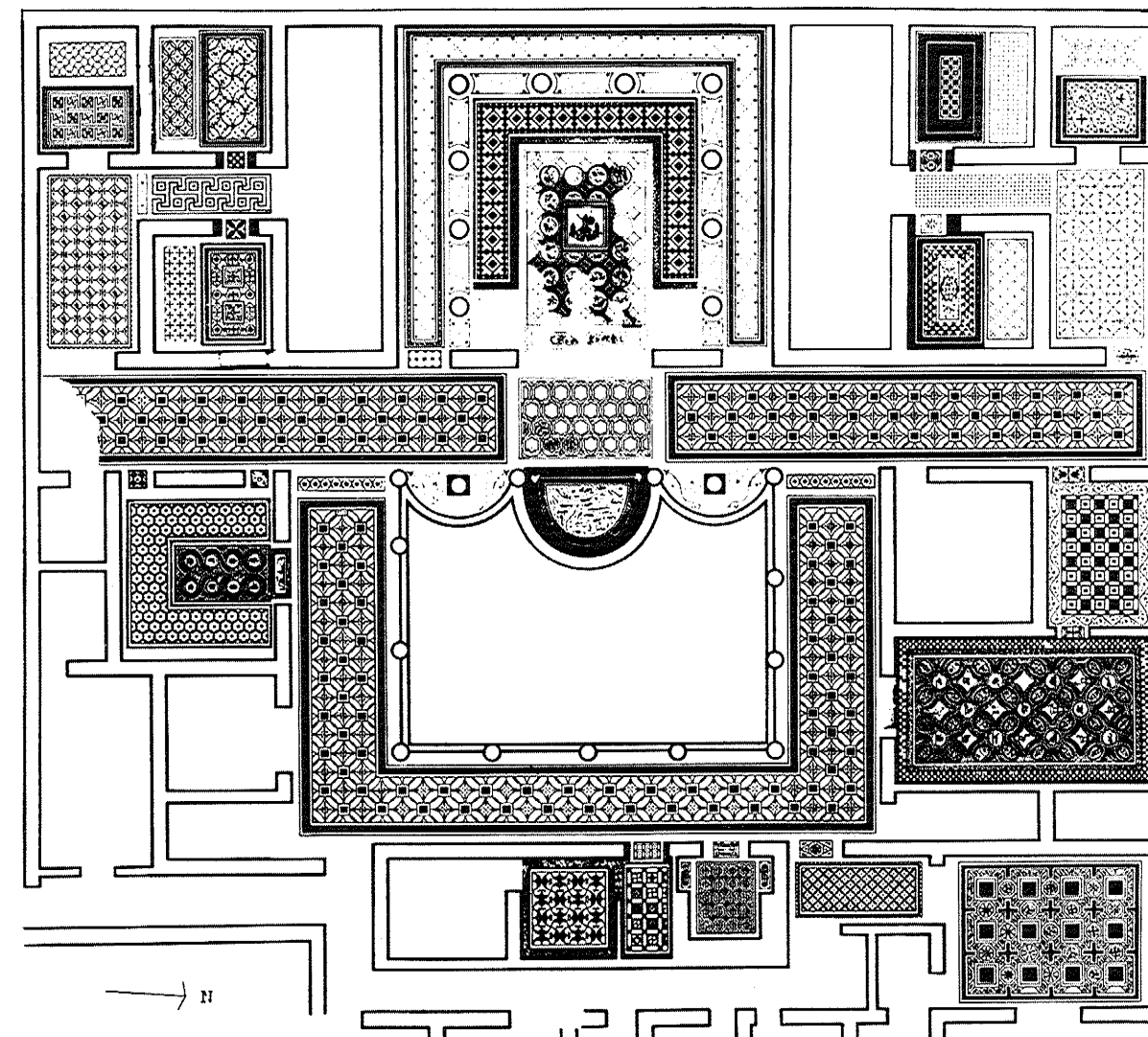
main reception room is frequently marked out as a *triclinium* by the lay-out of the pavement, and has the richest decoration of all. The peristyle itself often has a uniform ornamental pattern in all its wings, though sometimes one wing may be emphasised more than the rest. Quite frequently this pattern is interrupted in the wing dominated by the main reception room, where a separate and more highly decorated panel is placed at the entrance to this room. There may also be a fountain in the central court of the peristyle, either opposite the reception room or facing the main entrance to the house; it is often decorated with an appropriate design of fish, marine creatures, or the like. Other rooms have ornamental designs, while more utilitarian types of pavement are used in what were presumably service areas; in regions where polychrome mosaics are the norm, black-and-white may be used as a cheaper alternative in the same way. Separately designed panels are often placed on thresholds and in doorways; while the entrance to the whole house may also be given special treatment.

We can only identify the original programme of decoration when there have been no later changes, since houseowners frequently repaired their mosaics and substituted or added new ones over a period of several centuries. An unusually good example of a homogeneous and coherent programme may be seen in the House of the Triumph of Neptune at Acholla, in Africa Proconsularis, a peristyle house whose construction and decoration can be dated to c. AD 150–70¹⁷ (figure 309). Two rooms are marked out as *triclinia* by their floor plans: a huge colonnaded *oecus* dominating the central axis, and a smaller one off one side of the peristyle, evidently for more intimate parties. Both are lavishly decorated with figured mosaics. Two groups of rooms on either side of the large *oecus-triclinium* are identifiable as *cubicula* around an antechamber; they have simple patterns, mostly black-and-white, in the areas for the couches, much richer polychrome designs, predominantly floral and making extensive use of marble, in the area in front (figure 106). The porticoes of the peristyle are paved with a uniform pattern, which nevertheless emphasises the main wing serving the *oecus* and the bedroom groups; this is interrupted by a different

pattern in front of the *oecus*. Opposite this, intruding into the garden at the centre of the peristyle, is an apse decorated with fish, and with fragments of a wall mosaic showing Nereids and sea-monsters around its perimeter. It is not a fountain (perhaps water was in short supply), but evokes the fountains which occupy this position elsewhere. One other room has a very fine figured mosaic, and was evidently also designed for the reception and entertainment of guests. In some of the smaller rooms polychrome geometric designs are used, in others simpler black-and-white patterns, as if to distinguish relative importance. Further refinements come from the threshold panels at the entrances to most of the rooms, figured, floral, or geometric according to the nature of the room.

IV

Subject-matter was sometimes chosen to suit the location, though not usually in a very subtle way. Dining-rooms may be decorated with the little motifs of edible objects known as *xenia* (as in the small *triclinium* in the House of the Triumph of Neptune at Acholla), or with Dionysiac scenes; bedrooms occasionally have scenes of the loves of the gods or of satyrs and nymphs. Scenes advertising the owner's status are placed where visitors will see them, which also frequently means the main reception rooms. However there is a good deal of interchangeability in the choice of themes, and seldom a clear pattern of adaptation of theme to context. Only occasionally are there signs that a subject has been designed specifically to suit a particular location. The *asarotos oikos* motif of Sosos of Pergamon must have been intended for a dining-room, though there is no record of its original location; adaptations of it are found in *triclinia*, for instance lining a strip along the edge of the area for the couches in a mosaic from the House of the Months at Thysdrus (El Djem), where *xenia*-motifs occupy the central space.¹⁸ At Antioch the House of the Buffet Supper contained a mosaic with a very unusual representation of a meal, laid out with careful attention to its setting (figure 310). Here the room is marked out for the curving *stibadium* couch, and along the curve where the foot of the couch would run are shown a series of dishes bearing food for a banquet; they start with the eggs and other appetisers that opened the meal, then fish, a ham, and a fowl, and finally a cake for dessert. Loaves of bread, a few



309 Acholla, House of the Triumph of Neptune, plan. *oecus-triclinium* at top, between two groups of *cubicula*; small *triclinium* opening off peristyle on left. c. AD 150–170.

drinking vessels, and garlands for the banqueters fill the spaces between. The centre is occupied by Ganymede giving a drink to Zeus' eagle; and in a separate panel at the end of the room is a *crater* overflowing with wine, surrounded by peacocks and other birds that suggest an association with luxury. The idea of setting representations of food before the eyes of the guests is the same as that which lies behind the *xenia* mosaics, but here it is much more systematic.¹⁹

At the opposite end of the empire another unique mosaic designed to advertise the pleasures that awaited guests at the banquet comes from the House of Bacchus at Complutum (Alcalá de Henares) in Hispania Tarraconensis (figure 158). The corridor leading to the *triclinium* contained the figures of six half-lifesize servants

holding out drinking cups as if to welcome the guests. The *triclinium* itself has scenes of Dionysus, the vintage, and the Seasons, appropriate but conventional; but the servants appear to have been designed especially to fit their setting.²⁰

Private baths might also contain figures or scenes designed to allude to their use, for instance to illustrate the service that awaited the bathers. In the baths of the House of the Menander at Pompeii (1 10.4) bathers entering the

¹⁷ Gozlan, *Maison de Neptune*; above, ch.7, n.17.

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¹⁹ Levi, *AMP* 127–36, pls.xxiii–xxiv; probably early third century. See also Dunbabin, 'Triclinium' (cit.n.5), 130–1, figs.24–5.

²⁰ Above, ch.9, n.28. Cf. also the black-and-white frieze with food, drink, and cooking implements running around the peristyle (presumably leading to the *triclinium*) in a villa at Marbella in southern Spain, ch.9, n.10.

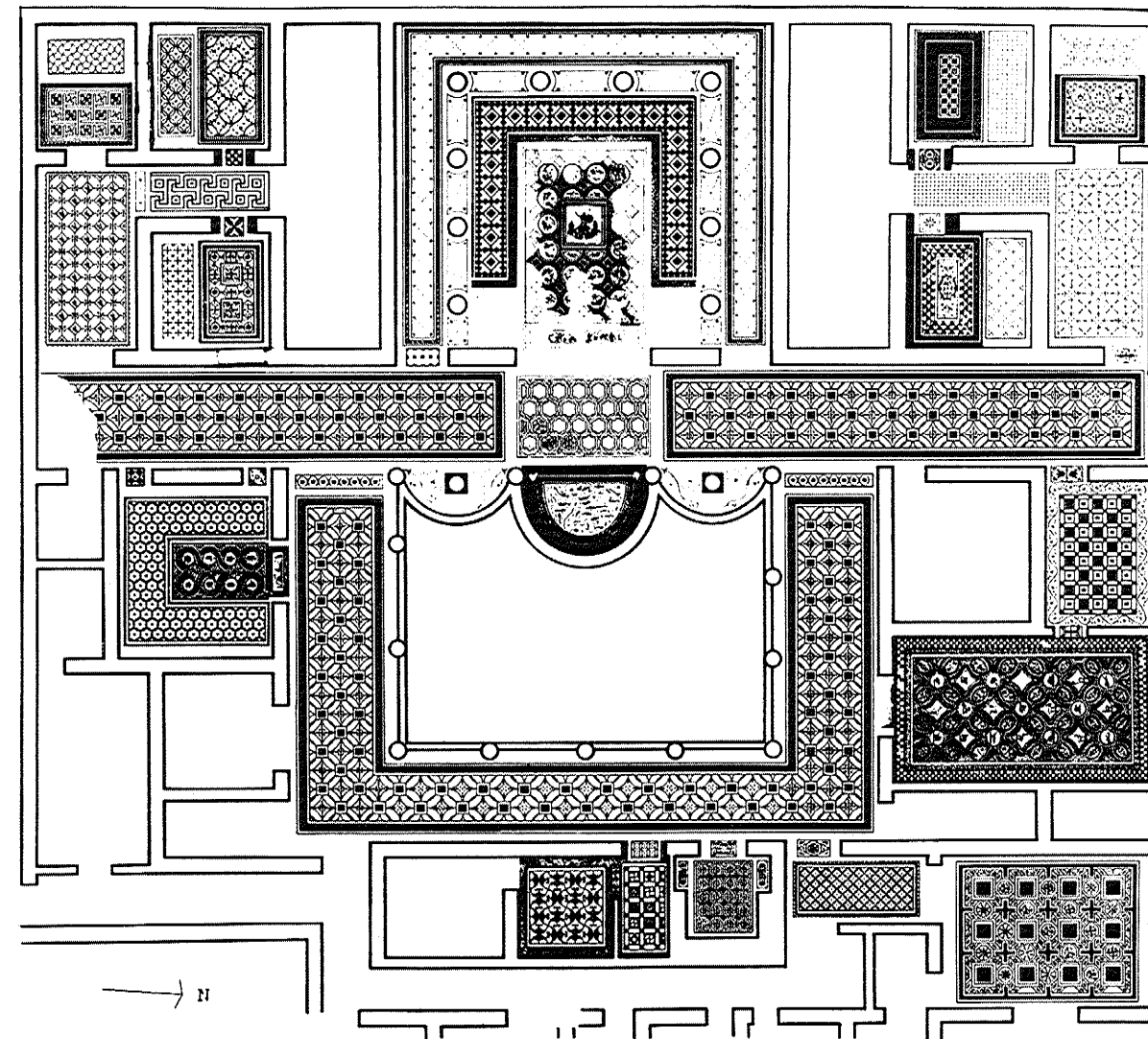
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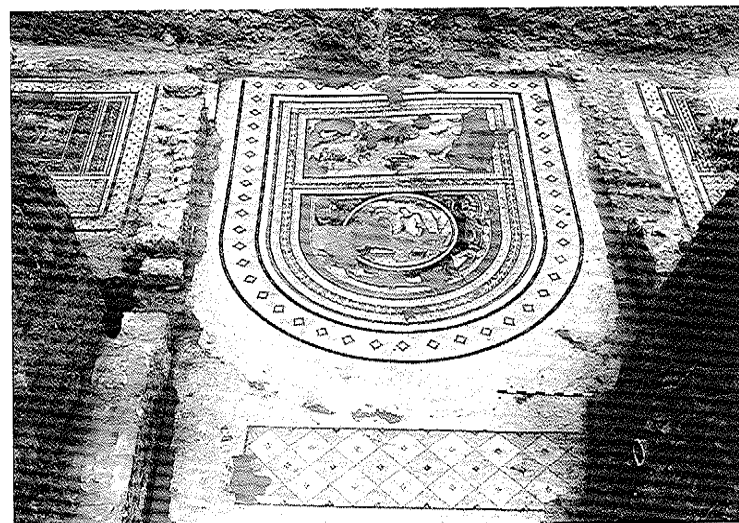
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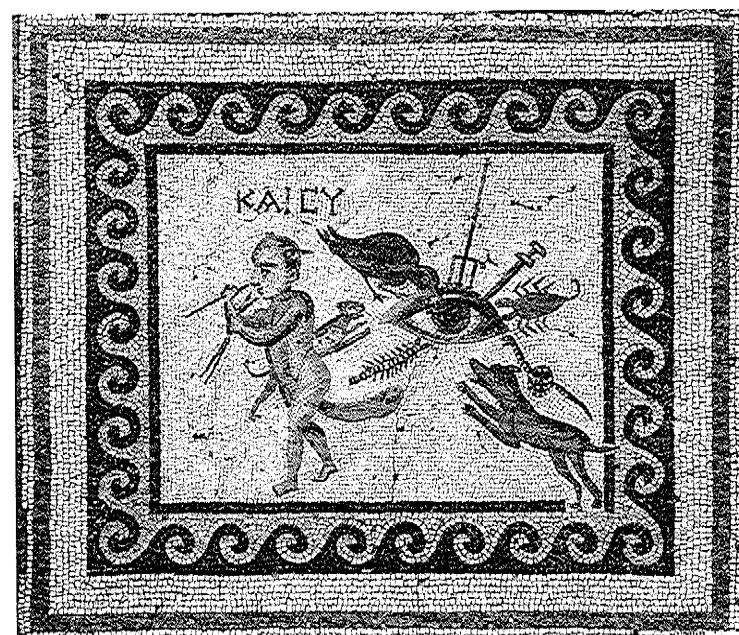
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¹⁹ Levi, *AMP* 127–36, pls.xxiii–xxiv; probably early third century. See also Dunbabin, 'Triclinium' (cit.n.5), 130–1, figs.24–5.

²⁰ Above, ch.9, n.28. Cf. also the black-and-white frieze with food, drink, and cooking implements running around the peristyle (presumably leading to the *triclinium*) in a villa at Marbella in southern Spain, ch.9, n.10.



310 Antioch, House of the Buffet Supper. Mosaic from dining-room showing food laid out for banquet; central medallion with Ganymede and the eagle. Probably early third century AD.



311 Antioch, House of the Evil Eye, mosaic from entrance designed to protect against the Evil Eye. Probably early second century AD.

caldarium saw before them the figure of a black slave carrying oil flasks, above a set of strigils for scraping the body after anointing.²¹ In the baths of the villa at Piazza Armerina more than three centuries later figures of servants waiting to attend bathers and massage them with oil were similarly represented in a room evidently used for that purpose; two are marked with their names in the vocative, as if to allow guests to summon them.²² Other mosaics in the baths at Piazza Armerina are also adapted to their setting. At the entrance to the baths is a group of the Lady with her two sons attended by maidservants with bathing equipment (figure 138); in the apses of the *frigidarium* figures are shown dressing or undressing.²³

Another area sometimes given special treatment was the entrance to the house. The entrance passages (*fauces*) of several houses at Pompeii contain images of watchdogs and other animals, like the bear in the House of the Bear; these are a shortlived fashion which was seldom repeated elsewhere.²⁴ A number of houses in different parts of the empire reveal their owners' preoccupation with protecting the entrance from possible evil influences, in particular with excluding the damaging power of envy or the Evil Eye, a widespread superstition known to us both from literary sources and from amulets designed to offer protection against it. The Evil Eye itself is represented a few times on mosaics, for instance at the entry to a house in Antioch, where it is shown pierced by sharp weapons, attacked by animals and birds with tooth, claw, and beak, and by venomous creatures such as scorpion and centipede; it is also threatened by the gigantic phallus of a dwarf, whose deformity was regarded as having the power to divert or distract evil forces²⁵ (figure 311). A different approach was taken by the owner of a house on the island of Kephallonia, whose inscriptions were discussed in chapter 16.²⁶ The entrance passage here is occupied by a panel containing the image of Envy (*Phthonos*), identified in the inscription beneath: he is shown strangling himself with his hands and torn apart by wild beasts (figure 312). It forms a powerful image of the self-destructive force of envy, which is turned back on those who might otherwise harm the house and its inhabitants with their envious gaze. More often simpler methods were adopted: an inscription challenges or defies the envious forces, or



312 Kephallonia, mosaic from entrance to house with apotropaic inscription and representation of Envy (*Phthonos*), torn by wild beasts. Third century AD.

apotropaic or lucky symbols are placed on the threshold. Among these are the phallus, like the one set (as part of a restoration) on the threshold at the entrance to the House of Jupiter Thunderer at Ostia (IV.4.3), and various plants which have associations of fertility and prosperity.²⁷

V

Mosaics could also be designed to take account of the function of the room in other types of buildings, though

patterns are harder to establish than in domestic architecture. Public baths were often decorated with marine creatures, with myths that had watery allusions, or with scenes of athletic events alluding to the activities in the *palaestra* that preceded bathing.²⁸ In tombs myths might be selected that were capable of an eschatological interpretation, and which are found in other media in funerary contexts, for example the Rape of Proserpina or the Return of Alcestis; or the deceased might be represented as a banqueter reclining on a couch, again a theme frequent in funerary art in other media.²⁹ For the most part these are subjects in wide use, which have been chosen from an established repertory as appropriate for the setting.

There are also examples where mosaics seem to have been a special commission, designed to suit the particular features of their location. The black-and-white mosaics of Rome and Italy were well suited to such use, and several examples were seen in chapter 4. The mosaics of the Square of the Corporations at Ostia use a limited range of motifs, most of which could be found readily enough in other contexts, and adapt them to the special purpose of alluding to the activities of the shippers; a few, such as the river with bridge, are more exceptional.³⁰ A large hall that forms part of a vast complex of warehouses in another part of Ostia (I.19.3) contains a black-and-white mosaic with a scene of the measurement of grain: one man carries a laden sack, marked off by a boy with a bunch of tallies, while three others are measuring the grain poured into a big measuring cylinder (figure 313). Although the inscription on the mosaic is damaged and incomprehensible, a *cippus* found in the same building contained a dedication by the Measurers' Guild (*Corpus Mensurum*), allowing the identification of the hall as their headquarters; the mosaic was clearly commissioned especially for it.³¹

Many other examples of subjects adapted to their setting could be quoted. There is, however, danger of a circular argument when no evidence for the use of the

²¹ Above, ch.4, n.13.

²² *Filosofiana* 359–62, room 5, pl.LXI, 144.

²³ *Ibid.* 331–4, room 21, fig.200, pl.IV, 135; 343–56, rooms.4a–f, pls.LVIII–LIX, 139–40. The marine scene in the centre of the *frigidarium* is also appropriate to its setting, but in a more conventional way.

²⁴ Ch.4, ns.14–15; Clarke 9–11; above n.14.

²⁵ D. Levi, 'The Evil Eye and the lucky hunchback', in R. Stillwell ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes III, The Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton 1941), 220–32; Levi *AMP* 28–34, pl.IV.

²⁶ Ch.16, n.46; Dunabin, Dickie, *JAC* 26, 1983, 7–37.

²⁷ *Ostia* IV, 185, no.344, pl.xii, part of a restoration apparently of the second century. For the wider practice, see J. Engemann, 'Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichtchristlichen und christlichen Spätantike', *JAC* 18, 1975, 22–48.

²⁸ Cf. K. Dunabin, 'Baiaurum grata voluptas: pleasures and dangers of the baths', *BSR* 57, 1989, 6–46. For athletes represented in baths, see for example M. Floriani Squarciapino, 'Nuovi mosaici ostiensi', *RendPontAcc* 58, 1985–6 (1987), 87–114; and ch.7, n.44, for the mosaic with athletic contests found in a small bathing establishment at Batten Zamour, near Capsa (Gafsa) in Byzacena.

²⁹ Cf. Bragantini, 'La decorazione' (cit.n.4); Calza, *La necropoli* (cit.n.4); and the banqueters in funerary mosaics from Thanae (Thina), Dunabin, *MRNA* 139, pl.137. For the tomb mosaics from Edessa, which combine some subjects from the standard Graeco-Roman repertory with elements adapted to local taste, see ch.10, ns.24–6.

³⁰ Ch.4, n.27; river in *statio* 27: *Ostia* 4, 74–6, no.108, pl.CLXXXIV, identifying it as the Nile.

³¹ *Aula dei Mensores: Ostia* 4, 33–6, no.58, pls.CLXXXVII–VIII; mid-third century.



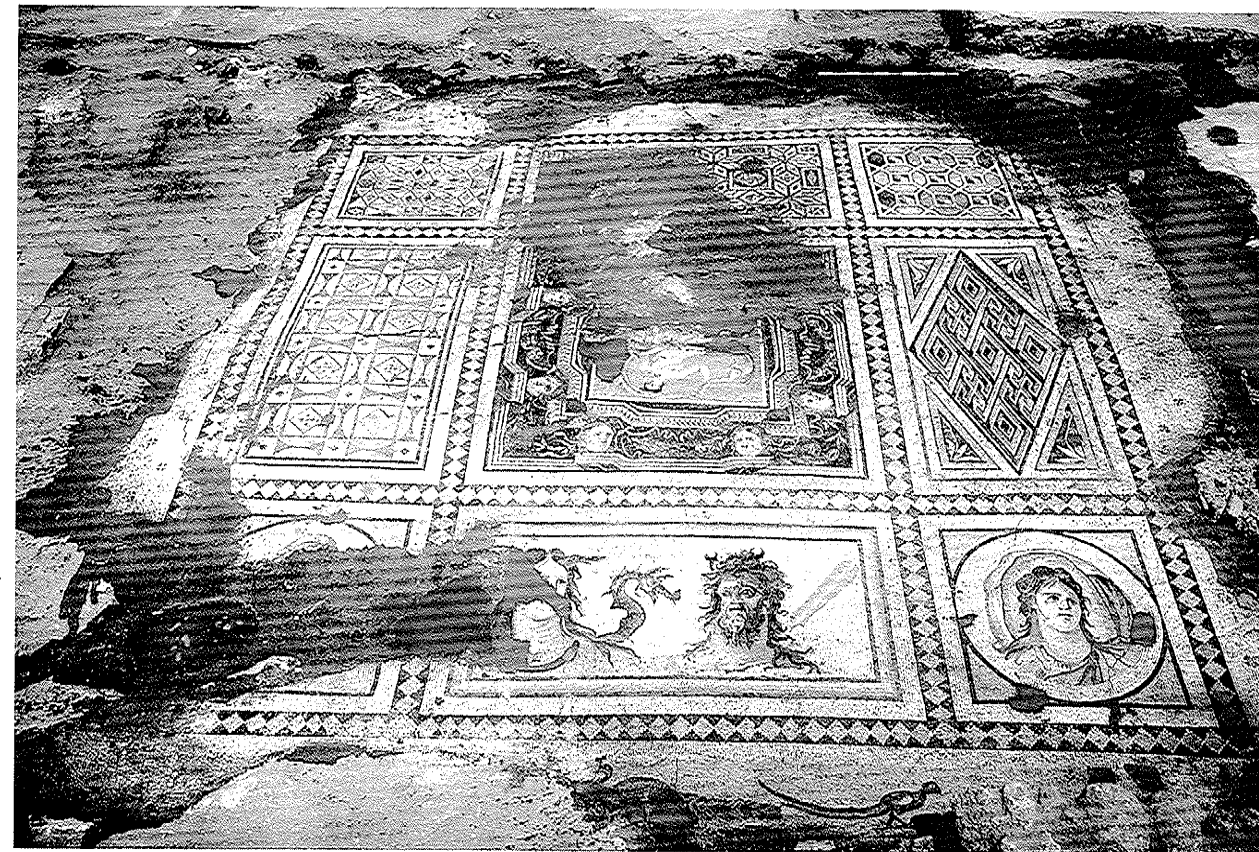
313 Ostia 1.19.3, Hall of the Measurers, scene of the measurement of grain. Figured panel 3.80 m × 2.70 m. Mid-third century AD.

room has survived other than what can be deduced from the mosaic. It can hardly be doubted that the mosaicists quite frequently endeavoured to produce a work that took account of the function of the room or building, or which corresponded to special requests from the patron (a subject that will be discussed in the next chapter); but seldom can patterns be established for such production.

VI

Much more difficult is the question of correlation between mosaics and the rest of the decoration of the room or its other architectural features. It has been noted several times that many of the decorative systems of composition used on mosaics had their origins in the design and decoration of ceilings and vaults. Compositional schemes based on patterns of coffers, for instance, are derived from those used in late Republican Italy for stuccoed ceilings; while centralised schemes divided radially

or with a central circle surrounded by semi- and quarter-circles look as if they echoed the design of a vault or dome (hence the latter are sometimes called vault-patterns).³² Since the upper parts of most buildings are missing it is seldom possible to tell whether such designs really reflected or corresponded to the actual roof, or had simply become conventional. However some go beyond the mere use of repertory patterns, and design the floor in ways which are manifestly intended to recall a decorated ceiling. The fashion prevailing in parts of the eastern Mediterranean in the late second and third centuries AD for illusionistic three-dimensional effects produced some striking examples, for instance the pavement of the *triclinium* of the House of the Boat of Psyche at Antioch³³ (figure 314). This was composed as a grid, with a square central panel. Within this was the design of a cornice, shown as if seen in perspective from below, with heads resting on brackets supporting the projecting elements of a band of dentils; this frames a panel showing Europa and the Bull. The complex perspective is not entirely successful, but the effect is undoubtedly intended to be that of looking up at the cornice surrounding a painted ceiling: it is placed so that in fact the guests would look down at it as



314 Antioch, House of the Boat of Psyche, mosaic from *triclinium* imitating design of a ceiling. Third century AD.

they reclined on their couches. It must nevertheless still be borne in mind that this exercise in virtuosity on the part of the mosaicist did not necessarily have any connection to the room's actual ceiling, which is not preserved.

The exceptional circumstances of preservation of the Campanian cities have permitted studies in houses here of the relationship between the decoration of walls, vaults, and floors, and of the relationship of the whole to the real space of the rooms. Barbet and Clarke have shown that in Pompeian houses, when the design of the pavement is used to mark the division of space within a room, for instance in *triclinia* or *cubicula*, it corresponds to similar divisions in wall painting and ceiling design; an example was seen above in the *cubicula* of the House of the Silver Wedding (v 2.1).³⁴ This implies that the overall lay-out of the room was planned in advance, presumably by the architect or contractor, not left to the individual crafts-

men.³⁵ Correlations have been noted between the chromatic effects of pavement and walls, for instance a white mosaic in a room with predominantly black walls and vice versa; while the decline in the taste for figured mosaics after the first century BC has often been linked to the increased use of figured decoration, and particularly of mock panel paintings, on walls in the Third and Fourth Pompeian Styles. More complicated spatial and optical effects have also been identified, with the mosaics helping to distinguish areas of passage, where the eye is not offered any single focus on which to rest, from areas of repose where viewpoints are deliberately created. The wall paintings, however, play the primary role in such schemes, the decoration of the pavements is subordinate.³⁶

Figured mosaics inevitably introduced the problem of orientation. A mosaic designed as an individual picture

³² Cf. ch. 4, n. 9.

³³ Levi AMP 167–70, pl. xxxv.

³⁴ Above n. 7.

³⁵ A. Barbet, 'Quelques rapports entre mosaïques et peintures murales à l'époque romaine', *Hommages Stern* 43–53; Barbet, *La peinture murale romaine. Les styles décoratifs pompéiens* (Paris 1985), esp. 267–9; J. Clarke, 'The non-alignment of functional dividers in mosaic and wall painting at Pompeii', *BullAIEMA* 12, 1988–9, 313–21, on the adjustments made by the mosaicists, with the comments of Barbet, *BullAIEMA* 13, 1990–1, 436.

³⁶ Cf. D. Corlatti Scagliarini, 'Spazio e decorazione nella pittura pompeiana', *Palladio* 23–5, 1974–6, 3–44; J. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250. Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford 1991), who studies the relationship of painted and mosaic decoration to one another and to their overall context in a series of well-preserved houses in Campania and at Ostia.

panel offered a single optimal viewpoint; from other parts of the room it would be seen sideways or upside down. The various all-over and compartmented designs used on mosaics in many regions in the Imperial period often mitigated this problem by offering the possibility of multiple viewpoints, echoing in this the practice of many of the early pebble mosaics of the Classical period. Figure scenes could be designed, for instance, to offer a segment to each guest reclining on the couches around a *triclinium*, or even to encourage visitors to follow a certain pattern of movement around a room or building. The floors of most large rooms, in fact, could never have been appreciated as a whole from any one point; individual figures or groups would have revealed themselves before the eyes of visitors as they walked around. John Clarke has argued that the black-and-white silhouette mosaics of second-century Italy are frequently designed to take account of the observers' patterns of movement. On the pavements of the three rooms of the Baths of Neptune at Ostia (to take the most sophisticated example) the marine figures are arranged to greet visitors at doorways and to guide, by

³⁷ Clarke 3–53, esp. 26–9; above, ch. 4, n. 23.

their own motion and gestures and the swirls of their tails, the visitors' movement around the rooms and across from one room to another, while also echoing the curves of the vaults overhead³⁷ (figure 62).

Such devices, however, are only part of the story. The concept of the single viewpoint was never abandoned, and many mosaics continued to be designed to be seen from one angle alone, even when their composition would have permitted an arrangement with multiple viewpoints. Many large figure panels must indeed have been difficult for an observer standing before them to take in as a whole. There is no uniformity of practice; some mosaicists (and presumably their clients) chose to take account of the angle of vision of those using the room, others to make the maximum impact from a single viewpoint, usually the point of entry to the room. In a substantial number of cases, moreover, no apparent attempt at accommodation to the architecture has been made in this regard; the mosaic appears to have been designed without much account of the way it would be viewed.

The patrons

I

To the contributions of the craftsmen and their traditions there must be added those of the patrons who commissioned the mosaics. Most of these are as anonymous as the mosaicists themselves, though some have left their names on inscriptions recording their role in creating the work. Very few of these can be identified with individuals known from the historical record; in general, attempts to attribute mosaics, and the buildings they decorate, to specific historical figures have been controversial and usually unproductive, as the examples of Piazza Armerina or the so-called 'Palace of Theodoric' at Ravenna demonstrate.¹ For the most part we are dependent on the internal evidence of the mosaics themselves to try to construct a generic image of the social standing of the patrons, and to measure their involvement with the mosaics they commissioned.

A certain number of inscriptions from all periods attest to the activity of the patrons responsible for the creation of mosaics, sometimes as part of a larger project involving the building along with its decoration.² The inscriptions may be written on the mosaic itself or cut separately on stone. Most of them come from public or semi-public contexts, and their principal function is to record the generosity and public spirit of the donors who have paid for the work as part of a public benefaction; in a religious setting the donors' piety may also be stressed. They do not

differ greatly from similar inscriptions recording construction in other media, and they seldom tell us much about the mosaics (or other pavement types) themselves. For example, at Delos an inscription in an *exedra* in the Sanctuary of the Syrian gods records that a certain Midas son of Zenon of Herakleia caused the mosaic to be laid, after dedicating the *exedra* itself; the mosaicist, Antaios, has added his own name at the end.³ More elaborately, the imperial legate Proculus at Lambaesis in Numidia left a record (inscribed on stone) that he had restored the temple of the god Aesculapius, and decorated the pavement with mosaic and the walls with marble.⁴ Others use the pavement as a place to record the completion of the building, and their contribution to it, but do not specifically mention the mosaic. Thus an inscription on an elegant mosaic of the Republican period at Croton in the south of Italy records that two local magistrates were responsible for building the bath: the mosaic is clearly part of the overall project.⁵

The donors of public monuments were usually members of the governing classes of their community, often magistrates or members of the city council (or their families) who might hope to gain some political benefit from their donations. They include a few identifiable individuals: a future, though short-lived, emperor of the breakaway Gallic empire at Augusta Treverorum (Trier) in the mid-third century, an imperial legate and consul designate at Lambaesis in Numidia at the beginning of the

¹ Piazza Armerina: above, ch. 8, n. 8. Ravenna, 'Palace of Theodoric': N. Duval, 'Comment reconnaître un palais impérial ou royal? Ravenne et Piazza Armerina', *FelRav* 115, 1978, 29–62, esp. 32–9; M.G. Maioli, 'L'edilizia privata tardoantica in Romagna: appunti sulla pavimentazione musiva', *CCARB* 34, 1987, 210–15. See also ch. 9, n. 41, for an attempt to identify the Maternus addressed in an inscription of the villa at Carranque in Spain, with a known Maternus Cynegius. For a villa at Eva in Greece recently identified as belonging to Herodes Atticus see ch. 12, n. 21; details are not yet published.

² For donor inscriptions of mosaics in Christian buildings see below, section IV. The much less common inscriptions that record the donation of mosaics or other types of pavement in secular and pagan buildings have not been collected; for some references, see M. Donderer, *Die Chronologie der römischen Mosaiken in Venetien und*

Istrien bis zur Zeit der Antonine (Berlin 1986), 3, 112; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 30.

³ Bruneau, *Delos* 226, no. 195, figs. 157–9: Μίδας Ζήνωνος Ἡράκλειος ἐψηφολόγησεν, ὁ καὶ τὴν ἐξέδραν ἀναθεῖς, ἐπὶ ἱερέως Φιλοξένου τοῦ Φιλοξένου Σουνιέω[ς], ζακορεύοντος Γοργίου. Ἀνταῖος Αἰσχρίωνος ἐποίησε.

⁴ AE 1917–18, 27; 1920, 21: [*pro salute et incolumitate dominorum nostrorum / [Severi et Antonini . . .] Augustorum et Iuliae Aug. matris Auggg. / et castrorum / [Ti. Cl. Subatianus] Proculus leg. Auggg. cos. desig. templum dei / [. . . restituit pavi]mentum tessellis et parietes marmorb[us] exornavit*. Date: AD 209–11.

⁵ P. Orsi, *NSc* 1911, suppl. 89–91, pls. v, vi, from the sanctuary of Hera Lacinia: [.] Lucilius A.f. Macer T. Annacus Sex.f. Thraos [I]I virei / [qu]in[que]nnales exs.c. balneum aedificandum curav[er]u[nt].

third; and numerous local municipal worthies.⁶ The donors of religious buildings, or of their decoration, might naturally be drawn from the same class, but could also come from lower down the social scale: a group of freedmen, for instance, contributed to a small temple at Ostia.⁷ Even a slave might occasionally record that he had paid for a mosaic to be laid in a sanctuary as votive offering, as the slave Ianuarios did in a little shrine dedicated to Hermes at Cyrene, in token of his prayer for the safety and success of Ti. Klaudios Iason Magnus, evidently his master.⁸

Inscriptions in domestic buildings are seldom so direct in recording the activities of the patron as builder or decorator, though there are occasional examples of the simple form 'so-and-so made this', written prominently where visitors will see it.⁹ More often the patrons' names are introduced more subtly: through greetings addressed to them, or through an allusion to the well-being or splendour of the house to which their name is attached. In the later Empire in particular there is a fashion in some parts of the Graeco-Roman world for the production of carefully turned verses which directly or indirectly compliment the patrons or attest to their involvement in the work: some examples are considered below in section III.

Not all these inscriptions are in Greek or Latin. A small number on monuments from the last two centuries BC use the pre-Roman languages of Italy or other parts of the western Mediterranean. Two Etruscans left their names on a black-and-white mosaic in a bath-building at Musarna in southern Etruria;¹⁰ an Oscan inscription on

signinum recorded the dedication of the pavement of the Forum temple at Cumae.¹¹ A pavement of *signinum* in a house near the Spanish town of Caminreal (Teruel) contained an inscription in the local Iberian script, probably recording the name of its owner.¹² The main Semitic languages of the eastern empire, Syriac and Aramaic, appear rather more often on the mosaics of early Byzantine churches in Syria, Palestine, or Arabia, and Hebrew is used in synagogues; Syriac is used earlier on the tomb mosaics of Edessa.¹³ However at all times and in all contexts within the period covered in this book, the vast majority of inscriptions on mosaics are in Latin or Greek.

II

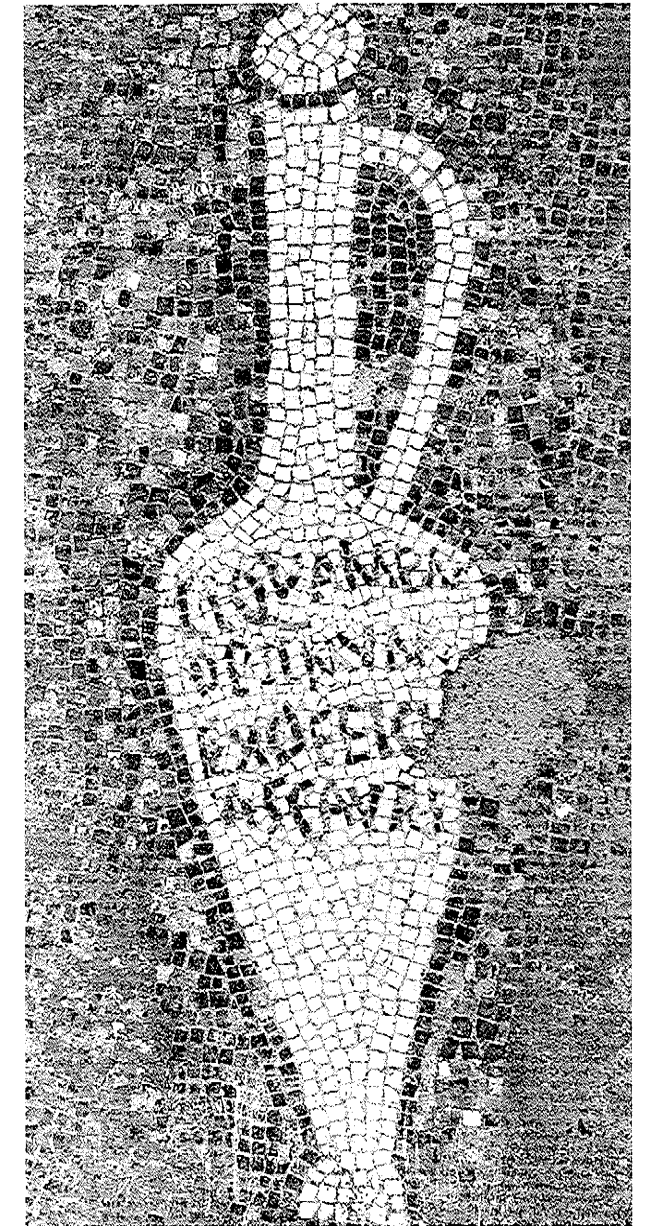
Our one surviving example of a contract for laying mosaics is the Hellenistic papyrus from the Zenon archive in Egypt, discussed in chapter 16.¹⁴ As was seen there, it gives remarkably specific instructions for the nature of the floor to be laid, including a model to be supplied from the royal palace: the contractor and the mosaicists are given directions about almost every aspect of the work. We cannot, however, assume this example to reflect normal practice outside Ptolemaic Egypt or in other circumstances. Apart from this one case, probably exceptional, we have no evidence except the mosaics themselves for the role of the patrons. Literary sources sometimes show wealthy Romans taking a direct part in planning the lay-out of their houses and gardens or in their decoration

with sculpture or paintings; none gives any indication how they might have gone about choosing the theme or the design of a mosaic. Options may have ranged from the patrons prescribing in detail what they wanted to their simply accepting what the mosaicists offered. A substantial proportion of mosaics consist of fairly standard workshop stock-in-trade, which would not allow much room for intervention by the patron. We may guess that it would have been normal practice for the head of a workshop to submit sketches for approval, or to offer samples of what the workshop could do, but we have no way of proving this. Even less definable is the role that may have been played by middlemen, either the patrons' representatives from their own household or the contractors or architects for the whole project.

It was seen in the previous chapter that mosaics were sometimes evidently special commissions. Occasionally we can see that they were designed expressly to suit the interests of a particular patron, though usually inscriptions are needed to make this clear. In a house at Pompeii (VII 16 (*Ins. Occ.*), 12–16) the atrium was paved with a simple black-and-white mosaic. At each corner around the *impluvium* was represented a one-handed jar, an *urceus* of recognisable Pompeian form, marked with an inscription identifying its contents as one of the fish sauces of which the Romans were inordinately fond, top-quality *garum* or *liquamen* from the factory of Scaurus (figure 315). A. Umbricius Scaurus is known from inscriptions as a wealthy producer and dealer in *garum* at Pompeii; there can be little doubt that this was his house, with the mosaic designed to illustrate the source of his wealth and to remind visitors of it.¹⁵

Another example of a very specific commission is the mosaic of Magerius from Smirat near Thysdrus in Africa Proconsularis, discussed in chapter 7 (figure 118). It is made quite clear to the viewer here that the hunters fighting leopards are to be identified as a particular team of arena hunters, and that the portrait of a richly dressed man at one side is that of the generous Magerius, whose munificence, and the populace's enthusiastic acclamations in response to it, are set out at length in the central inscriptions. The details, and the text of the inscription, must have been spelled out to the mosaicists explicitly; the mosaic is used to constitute a permanent record of the patron's benefaction.¹⁶

Other mosaics, though not quite so explicit, nevertheless appear to show an attempt to personalise a scene, presumably to refer to specific circumstances or to suit the



315 Pompeii VII 16 (*Ins. Occ.*), 12–16, House of Umbricius Scaurus, *garum* jar from atrium. c. AD 25–35.

special interests of the patron. Thus hunting scenes, especially in Africa and Spain, frequently contain names written beside either the hunters themselves or their horses and hounds, as if to identify them¹⁷ (for example figures 115, 116). The names need not necessarily be those

⁶ Trier: mosaic with inscription commemorating the restoration (presumably of the whole building) by M. Piaonius Victorinus, Gallic emperor AD 268–70, named in the inscription as tribune of the Praetorian guards: *CIL* XIII 3679; *Parlasca* 44, pls. 42.2, 48.5. Lambaesis: above n.4.

⁷ *CIL* XIV 4134; H. Bloch in *Scavi di Ostia* 3, *Le necropoli* (Rome 1958), 210–11, fig. 95, from one of the Quattro Tempietti (II.8.2). The damaged inscription on the mosaic records the activity of the *duoviri* (two local magistrates, one of whom, C. Cartilius Poplicola, is known from other inscriptions to have had a prominent career in the early Augustan period), followed by five other names, four those of freedmen.

⁸ P. Mingazzini, *L'Insula di Giasone Magno a Cirene* (Rome 1966), 12–17, pl. VI.1–2: Θεῶν Μεγάλων Ἑρμῆς Ἰανουάριος δοῦλος εὐχὴν ἦν εὐξάμενος ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας καὶ νεκρῆς Τ[...]. Κλ. Ἰάσονος Μάγνου ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἐπιτηροῦσθαι τῆς αἰ.

⁹ These cannot always be clearly distinguished from artists' signatures, except perhaps by the prominence of the inscriptions or the formal manner in which the names are given: see above, ch. 16, ns. 33, 26, on Gaijos Pinnios Restitoutos at Nea Paphos or T. Sen(nius) Felix Putcolanus at Lillebonne.

¹⁰ G. Barbieri, 'Musarna 2. Note in margine al restauro dei mosaici', *BdA* 72, 1987, fasc. 41, 61–70; H. Broise, V. Jolivet, 'Le bain en Etrurie à l'époque hellénistique', in *Les Thermes romains* (CEFR 142, Paris 1991), 89–90: Vel Alethna son of Avle and Luvce Hulchnies son of Avle.

¹¹ I. Sgobbo, *RendNap* 52, 1977, 248–9, pl. IX. Another Oscan inscription, in bronze letters, was set into the scutellum pavement of the Temple of Apollo at Pompeii: E. La Rocca, M. and A. de Vos, *Guida archeologica di Pompei* (Verona 1976), 100.

¹² J. Vicente Redón *et al.*, 'Un pavimento de opus signinum con epigrafe ibérico', in *Mosaicos Romanos* 11–42; the pavement must have been laid in the late second or beginning of the first century BC. The inscription is interpreted as 'Likinete from Usecerde made this', with Likinete taken as the name of the owner of the house. However J. Gómez Pallarès, *Epigraphica* 53, 1991, 79–81, does not exclude the possibility that it may be the name of the craftsman.

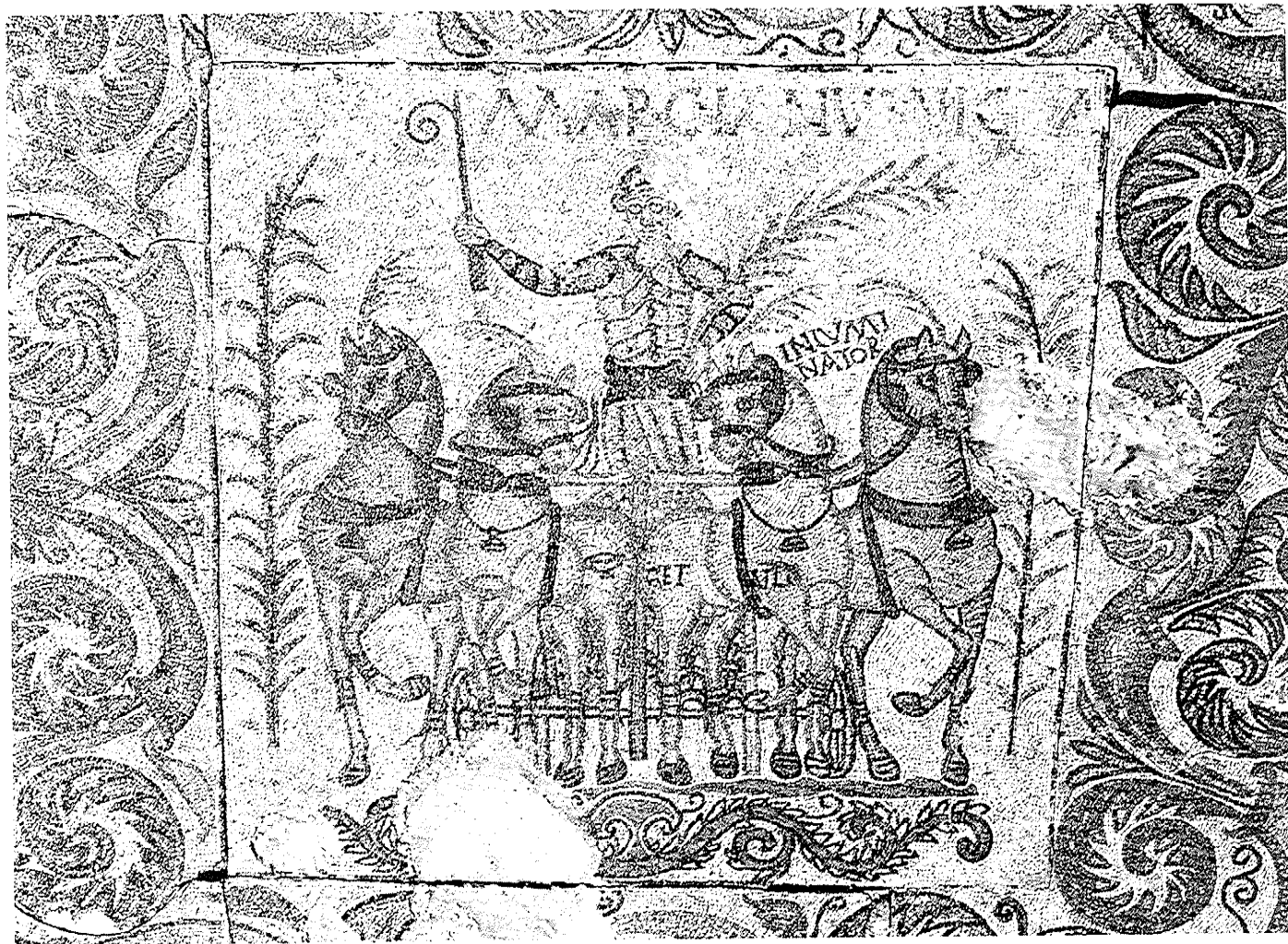
¹³ See above, chs. 10, ns. 24–5; 11, ns. 6–12; Donceel-Voute 465–75; Piccirillo, *Jordan*, index s.v. inscriptions, Semitic.

¹⁴ Ch. 16, section IV.

¹⁵ R. Curtis, 'A personalized floor mosaic from Pompeii', *AJA* 88, 1984, 557–66, pls. 74–5; Curtis, 'A. Umbricius Scaurus of Pompeii', in R. Curtis ed., *Studia Pompeiana et Classica in honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski* 1 (New Rochelle NY 1988), 19–49; above, ch. 4, n. 18. The longest of the four inscriptions reads *liquamen optimum ex officio Scauri*; two others refer to the *G(ari) F(los) Scom(bri)* of Scaurus.

¹⁶ Ch. 7, n. 40.

¹⁷ E.g. ch. 7, n. 33.

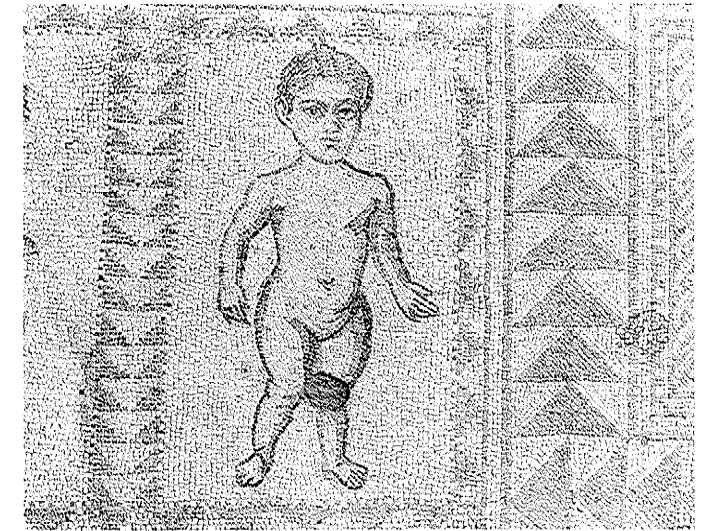
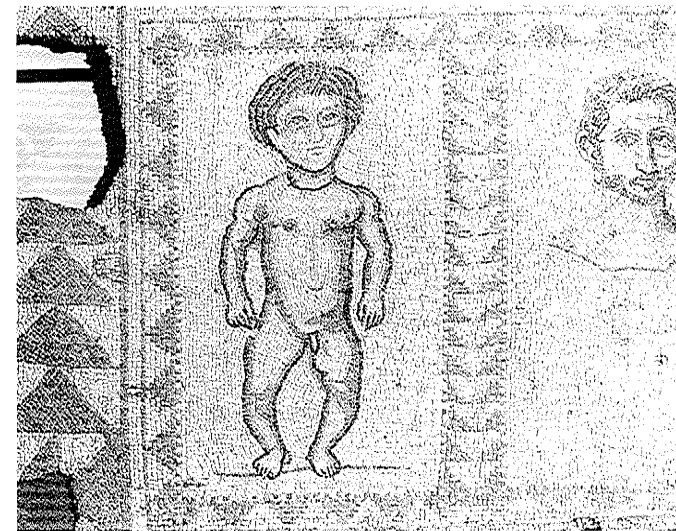


316 Emerita, mosaic with charioteer Marcianus. Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Mérida. Probably second half of the fourth century AD.

of the owner and his family, or of their real dogs and horses, but could be generic names chosen to give an impression of greater individuality to the scene; but the original impetus for the use of names must have come from a desire to allude to real figures. Similarly scenes from the circus are often accompanied by the names of charioteers and/or their horses, and images of victorious charioteers by their names and a victory acclamation. For instance at Emerita (Mérida) in Lusitania, two charioteers named Marcianus and Paulus are both accompanied by the wish for victory, *Nica*, and in addition Marcianus' lead horse is named as *Inluminator*, and bears what appears to be a stable mark, *Getuli*, on his flank (figure 316). Two

Spanish mosaics, from a villa at Bell-lloch (Gerona) and from Barcino (Barcelona) show chariots racing in the circus with a plethora of names: on the first the charioteers and (usually) one lead horse are all named, on the second all four horses in each team. It cannot be proved that such names are always those of real individuals; sometimes they have a typical quality and may have been chosen simply to enliven the scene. Nevertheless the point of the procedure surely comes from the possibility of allusion to actual current favourites.¹⁸

The important point is that scenes such as these served to assert the wealth and status of the patrons. The majority of the wealthy homeowners who commissioned the mosaics belonged to the municipal élite from whom were drawn the magistrates and town councils of innumerable small cities of the empire. Vast numbers of inscriptions record their concern with their standing among their townfolk, and above all the important role of euergetism – the performance of benefactions, among which the pro-



317 Ivailovgrad, villa, portrait of man with two children. Probably third century AD.

vision of games and spectacles ranked very high, in return for the favour and support of the populace. Almost all the mosaics in question come from the private setting of the patrons' own houses (where they would have been seen by visitors), but they reveal preoccupations similar to those expressed in the public inscriptions. The scenes of the games may commemorate events financed or presided over by the patrons, or may illustrate more generally the significant role that such events played in their lives; scenes of hunting or of prosperous country estates and wealthy villas may allude directly to their own possessions, or again may simply reflect that they belonged to a class to whom such things were important. Only occasionally, as with Magerius and his like, can we identify explicitly the hand of the patron directing the mosaicists as to the content of the mosaics; given sufficient demand for such scenes, the mosaic workshops would develop them as a part of their normal repertory. But the appearance of scenes of this sort, and their popularity in certain regions and at certain periods, is an unmistakable sign that patrons were requesting mosaics that would promote their self-presentation and enhance their status, whether or not they were specific about the detailed content of the scenes.

The rare examples of what appear to be portraits of individuals on domestic mosaics fall into a similar category. It is likely, though seldom absolutely demonstrable,

that these represent the patrons or their family, either simply, as a piece of straightforward self-presentation, or more subtly, in some flattering role. A villa near Ivailovgrad, in the Roman province of Thrace (now in Bulgaria) contained in its principal room (alongside a number of more conventional figure subjects) three panels containing the bust of a man flanked by two naked children, boy and girl (figure 317a, b). The man's features are highly individualised, and the treatment of all three figures differs greatly from that of the other figures on the mosaic; the panels are set in a conspicuous position where they will be seen directly by those entering the room. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they are meant to represent the owner and his family at the time that the mosaic was laid.¹⁹ Much cruder images of a man and a woman on the mosaic of one of the principal rooms in a villa at Torres Novas in Lusitania (now in Portugal) may be identified by an inscription in an adjacent panel: it greets the owners Cardilius and Avita by name, and wishes them a happy life in their tower.²⁰ The extraordinary border of the mosaic of Achilles on Skyros in the villa of La Olmeda at Pedrosa de la Vega in Hispania Tarraconensis contains a series of medallions with male and female portraits (fifteen surviving) (plate 27). They are represented with remarkable realism, and give the impression of a family gallery.²¹

Elsewhere figures who are surely to be identified as the

¹⁹ J. Mladenova, 'Les mosaïques de la villa d'Ivailovgrad (Bulgarie)', *CMGR* 111, 153–6, figs. 8, 10.

²⁰ *Viventes Cardilius et Avita felix turre: A. Do Paço, ArchEspArq* 37, 1964, 81–7, figs. 9, 10; Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 138–9 with refs. for the reading of the inscription. Cf. the villa at Tossa de Mar (Gerona) in Hispania Tarraconensis, where the inscription *salvo Vitale felix turissa* is written above a figure standing in an arcade: Vitalis is surely the owner, on whose safety depends the happiness of the

estate named Turissa: M. Guardia Pons, *Los Mosaicos de la antigüedad tardía en Hispania* (Barcelona 1992), 62–4. I. Rodá, 'Iconografía y epigrafía en dos mosaicos hispanos: las villas de Tossa y de Dueñas', *CMGR* vi, 35–40, identifies the figure in the arcade convincingly as a personification of the villa Turissa itself; she also doubts whether the figures on the Torres Novas mosaic are meant to be the proprietors.

²¹ J. Lancha, in *Mosaicos Romanos* 169–80; cf. above, ch. 9, n. 32.

owners of the house are represented engaging in significant activities, and/or with attributes designed to convey to the spectator a message about their status or nature. The mosaic of Dominus Julius from Carthage, discussed in chapter 7, shows the lord and lady of the estate beside the buildings of their villa, and receiving the gifts of its seasonal produce²² (figure 122). The lady in one corner of the mosaic leans upon a column in an elegant pose modelled upon that of the goddess Venus, and receives jewellery from her maid, while roses grow behind her; the associations evoked are those of luxury and elegance. This is conveyed even more clearly by a mosaic from the private baths of the rich villa at Sidi Ghrib, south of Carthage, decorated around the end of the fourth century or beginning of the fifth. One vestibule here contained a mosaic which showed the *toilette* of the lady.²³ She is seated on an impressive chair, a footstool under her feet, dressed in elegant robes, undoubtedly of silk; her hair is contained in a snood striped with gold, and she wears a necklace and many bracelets. She is putting the finishing touches to her attire by attaching an ear-ring, while one of her maids holds up a mirror in which she is reflected; another maid holds a tray of jewels. All around are articles for the bath: vessels of silver, including a shell-shaped basin and a cosmetic case, a box full of clean linen, a pair of fine sandals. The ideal of femininity that is presented here implies beauty, luxury, comfort, cleanliness, and above all wealth.

Once again, one cannot always assume that images such as these necessarily required the direct participation of the owner in choosing the programme of decoration. The lady at her *toilette*, like the representations of bathers in the baths at Piazza Armerina, belongs in a category of images thought appropriate for the private baths of the wealthy and luxurious. But the baths at Sidi Ghrib, which were decorated in a single phase, have a thematic coherence which suggests that the subjects and their arrangement have been carefully thought out. The panel with the

lady is balanced by one which shows the master of the estate; the theme of her *toilette* is echoed in a scene of the marine Venus, to whom the lady is implicitly thereby compared; while the main subject throughout the central rooms of the baths is the marine thiasos that escorts Neptune as he carries his bride Amphitrite – again perhaps with complimentary implications for the two owners whose bathing is accompanied by such divine exemplars. A mosaic inscription across the front of one of the bathing pools makes the owner speak of his accomplishments in the first person. The owners may not themselves have dictated the content of the decoration, but its aim is their exaltation, and at the least, their approval must have been assumed.²⁴

Images might also be used to assert the cultural pretensions of the owners.²⁵ Mosaics which contain quotations from Homer or Vergil, or which illustrate obscure myths or seldom illustrated literary works, are surely designed to suggest the superior culture of the patron or flatter the guest whose cultural knowledge was addressed. An excellent example is given by a Spanish mosaic from a villa near Cabezón de Pisuerga (Valladolid), in Tarraconensis, dated to the fourth century. It shows two pairs of warriors, one fighting, the other shaking hands. Inscriptions in both Latin and Greek identify the scene as the encounter between Glaukos and Diomedes in Book 6 of the Iliad, which ends with their swearing guest-friendship and exchanging gifts. Its presence here is surely a subtle compliment to the culture of the owner and his guests, who are assumed to recognise the allusion as a paradigm of hospitality; while the presence of the Latin inscription may have helped those who might not immediately recognise the original Greek.²⁶

Similarly the allegories, occasionally quite complex, found especially in the eastern provinces suggest a choice made by a learned patron.²⁷ Modern scholars have sometimes suggested that behind the combination of diverse themes within a pavement or an entire house lies an icon-

ographic programme designed to express the philosophical outlook or religious commitments of the patron who commissioned the work. Such interpretations are normally impossible to prove, but literary sources indicate that allegorical exegesis of this sort was fashionable among a certain section of the upper classes, and it would be plausible that mosaics should sometimes have been designed to suit such tastes.

Such interpretations can of course lead to exaggerated exegesis, as when mosaics in private settings are read as expressing eschatological concepts and the patrons' hopes for the afterlife, merely because similar subjects occur in funerary contexts. Roman art in the private sphere is regularly marked by multivalence or polysemy. Its meaning came from context, and accordingly any given theme could be read in different ways. This means that we can seldom, in the absence of clear external indications, hope to establish the meaning of particular examples, or the way in which individual works were regarded by their original owner and commissioner, still less by the craftsmen who made them. Usually the best we can do is to establish the range of significance which a theme, or a combination of themes, might have possessed.

In the same way, we cannot hope in most individual cases to assess the extent to which the content of mosaics was determined by the wishes of the patrons. What we can say is that a substantial proportion of the imagery suited the interests of the class who commissioned them, and could be used to communicate a message about the cultural expectations of their owners, as they defined their position in society.

III

Words could be used to express or enhance such messages more explicitly. Mosaics were used from a very early stage in their development as a location for written texts, which

could range from simple formulae of greeting or informative labels to lengthy records of dedication or, in the later Empire especially, to verses lauding the beauty of the work. As was seen above, the inscriptions in public or semi-public places usually give little more than the name of the donor, following standard and familiar formulae. The inscriptions laid in private settings are often much more original. Several houses at Pompeii contain, instead of normal greetings to the visitor, pithy comments such as 'profit is joy' (*lucrum gaudium*), which surely must have been expressly chosen as an expression of their owners' philosophy.²⁸ Some inscriptions take the form of a wish for the happiness or prosperity of the house (or household) named: for instance 'May the house of the Sollertii always be happy with those who belong to it' at Thysdrus (El Djem).²⁹ Others address the owners by name, also with wishes for happiness or for enjoyment of their possessions: in the villa at Carranque in central Spain, the wish runs 'Be happy, Maternus, in the use of this bedroom'.³⁰ The inscription may also speak in the persona of the owner himself. The inscription across the front of a pool in the baths at Sidi Ghrib opens 'I have done more than I was able (i.e., than my resources permitted?), less than I wished . . .'.³¹ There is often an element of boasting in such inscriptions; they may also convey either a wish of good augury or an attempt to defy or avert the ill effects that might ensue from envy or the power of the Evil Eye, in a manner discussed in the previous chapter.³²

Some inscriptions from the later centuries of the Empire take the form of verses, lauding the beauty of the work accomplished (either the mosaic or an entire building) or praising its creator – which means, almost always, the one who paid for it. Another African inscription, from private baths at Sidi-Abdallah, near Hippo Diarrhytus (Bizerta), speaks of the 'shining roofs of the *fundus Bassianus*, nicknamed Baiae . . .'.³³ The Greek world has left several examples of such verse inscriptions, dating mostly from the

²² Ch.7, n.46.

²³ A. Ennabli, 'Les thermes du thiasos marin de Sidi Ghrib (Tunisie)', *Mon Piot* 68, 1986, 1–59, esp.42–4, pl.xiv. Pottery sealed under the mosaics gives a *terminus post quem* of the late fourth to early fifth century.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, esp. 31–55; for the inscription see below n.29. The panel showing the *dominus* (pls.xiv–xvii) is usually taken to represent him setting out for the hunt, with a servant carrying a bundle of glue-sticks to catch birds; the ample costumes of the master and the attendant leading the way in front of him seem unsuitable for hunting, and suggest to me that he too is on the way to the baths, and the

sticks carried by the servant are to be read as fuel. For the baths at Piazza Armerina, see above, ch.19, n.23.

²⁵ On this whole subject, see J. Lancha, *Mosaïque et Culture dans l'Occident romain (Ier–IVe s.)* (Rome 1997).

²⁶ T. Mañanes, M.A. Gutierrez, C. Agundez, *El Mosaico de la Villa Romana de Santa Cruz (Cabezón de Pisuerga, Valladolid)* (Valladolid 1987); *CMEsp* xi, 36–46, no.17, pls.13–17, 35–6. The inscriptions are fragmentary, but the Greek one ends [μεμω]τε μέχεσθαι, the end of Il.6.120, while the Latin runs (in part) [manu]s iun[x]eru[nt] / [T]ydi[des] . . .

²⁷ E.g. ch.10, n.16.

²⁸ Cf. ch.4, n.17.

²⁹ *Sollertiana domus semper felix cum suis*, in the vestibule to a bedroom, perhaps of the late second or early third century: Foucher, *Thysdrus* 1961, 22, pl.xxd. Cf. also the inscription *Domus Aripiorum et Ulpiorum Vibiorum felix*, on a threshold at Rome: Donderer, *Mosaizisten* 138, c19; and above, n.20.

³⁰ *Utere felix, Materne, hunc cubiculum*: above chs.9, n.38–40; 16, n.19. *Utere felix* and related formulae are found very frequently on small objects for personal use.

³¹ *Plus feci quam potui, minus quam volui, si placet commune est, si displicet nostrum est. hic sunt tria verva, catu sedes ebria*: Ennabli, 'Les

thermes' (cit.n.23), with a note on the inscription (which ends with what appears to be an enigmatic riddle) by L. Ennabli, 56–7. Cf. also the inscription accompanying a mask of Ocean from Ain-Témouchent near Sétif in Mauretania, which ends *hoc studio superamus avos, gratumque renidet aedibus in nostris summus apex operis*: Dunabin, *MRNA* 151–2. These formulae seem to be characteristically African.

³² Above, ch.19, ns.25–6.

³³ *Splendent tecta Bassiani fundi, cognomine Baiae . . .*: Dunabin, *MRNA* 129; *CIL* viii 25425.

fourth to sixth centuries AD. They are not confined to private houses, but are found also in the semi-public setting of baths, where there was extra cause to make known the name and generosity of the donor. For instance, a small bath-building at Anemurium on the Cilician coast contained an inscription on its mosaic praising the benefactions of the donor, the high military officer Mouseos: 'Copious is the charm of the buildings; in charge of everything is the *strategos* Mouseos whom nature has adorned with shining qualities. May Envy keep away from the excellence of the mosaic.'³⁴ At Sheikh Zouède on the Sinai peninsula, on a mosaic with scenes of a Dionysiac thiasos and of Hippolytus and Phaedra, there is an address to Nestor the founder, lover of beauty, and two sets of verses praising the beauty of the work in terms such as 'See the charming things that art has set in the stones [of the mosaic]...'³⁵

Of course the patrons need not have dictated these verses personally. Still less do they necessarily show interest on the patron's part in the overall scheme of decoration: the Anemurium inscription is at the centre of an ornamental design that is unlikely to have been a special commission. What they show is that the general overseer of the project was conscious that what was produced could be expected to win the patron's approval. Occasionally there do seem to be signs of closer involvement. In chapters 16 and 19 I discussed the two mosaics from the island of Kephallonia with the inscriptions of Krateros, one accompanying the representation of Envy (*Phthonos*), an image against the Evil Eye, the other with a scene of sacrifice. The inscriptions speak of the skill of the mosaics, in terms similar to those quoted above, and in the sacrifice scene also praise the piety of Krateros and his son: praise of this sort is reserved for patrons.³⁶ Since both

inscriptions speak specifically of the scenes on the mosaics, it looks as though we have a rare case where we can see that the patron prescribed the subjects of the two mosaics, one to protect his house from evil influences, the other as a mark of piety, and requested or composed appropriate verses to go with them.

IV

The pavements of Christian buildings often attest much more clearly the activities of patrons and donors. Inscriptions in churches in both east and west very frequently record that the mosaics were the gift of named individuals.³⁷ These range from the bishop, or other high ecclesiastical authority, who may have been responsible for the dedication of the whole building or the decoration of a part of it, through other donors, ecclesiastic or lay, who have made substantial gifts, down to quite humble clerics and layfolk who record the gift of a few feet of mosaic. While the activity of the first group does not differ very much in principle from that of the secular donors of buildings such as baths, donations by lay people show the operation of quite a different pattern: funds were raised from a congregation for a project which they did not control. These records differ at different periods and in different regions of the Graeco-Roman world, and raise complex questions that cannot be treated here.³⁸

However some points are relevant to the questions discussed in the rest of this chapter. The bishops and other high ecclesiastics often record their donations in terms very similar to those used in secular foundations, for instance with the same sort of flowery verses.³⁹ The

assumption that they were responsible for the choice of the iconographic programme of decoration is supported by literary sources which show how much care leading churchmen could devote to such questions; but here too, the mosaics only rarely bear clear witness to their direct involvement in the choice of theme. Closest perhaps is the transept panel in Basilica A at Nikopolis in Epirus, where a landscape with birds and fruit trees surrounded by a border of fish in water is explained in the accompanying inscription as the image of Earth surrounded by Ocean, the foundation of the greathearted archpriest Dometios, identifiable as a bishop of the first half of the sixth century. The inscription is unusual in the degree to which it explains the scene on the mosaic, and it certainly appears that Dometios has wished to ensure that it will be interpreted correctly⁴⁰ (figure 232).

It is much harder to estimate how much control may have been exercised over the content of the mosaics by other donors, lesser ecclesiastics or lay persons, who gave entire pavements or substantial portions of them; doubtless this varied under different circumstances. In the east names sometimes accompany figures, who may be represented in attitudes of prayer, like Theodoros the sacristan and his wife Georgia in SS. Cosmas and Damianos at Gerasa (figure 209); in scenes indicating their livelihood and the source of their wealth, like Mouchasos the camel-driver in the church of St George at Deir el-'Adas in southern Syria (figure 199); or with offerings, like the lady Silthous scattering coins and her companion bearing a roast fowl on a plate, at Kissufim in the Negev (figure 318).⁴¹ The wishes of the donors must have been taken into account in designing these floors, even if they did not actually dictate how they were to be represented.

At the opposite extreme are the mosaics, found especially in the churches of northern Italy, where series of inscriptions are inserted into the compartments of an ornamental pattern, giving the names of the donors and the number of feet of mosaic which each has donated. Some are persons of high rank, others of quite humble status; but in either case, their participation is limited,



318 Kissufim, church, portraits of Lady Silthous and another female donor. AD 576–8.

their contribution essentially pecuniary. The design, usually simple in itself, is manifestly predetermined; at the most, the donors might choose the formula of offering, or perhaps the location in the building where their names appear. Good examples may be seen, for instance, in the sixth-century mosaics of the church of St Euphemia at Grado, in northern Italy. Fifty-six inscriptions of donors are recorded here, most either in the nave or in an annex to the south. The bishop who initiated the work, Elias, occupies the place of honour, with inscriptions in the centre of both the nave and the annex. The inscriptions of other donors, lay and ecclesiastic, occupy panels or medallions in the geometric design. They give names and, sometimes, occupations, and in many cases the amount of surface paved, which varies from two hundred feet to twenty-five or even less. The overall programme of decoration was clearly established by the ecclesiastical authorities; individual donors might at the most have exercised some choice in the formulae used. Nevertheless, such inscriptions serve to show how even quite humble individuals (for instance a shoemaker and a barber) had the opportunity of direct involvement in the work, recorded in permanent form; the motivation for their contribution was now more likely to be hope of a heavenly reward than the desire for recognition in this world.⁴²

³⁴ Πολλὴ μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ χάρις τῶν κτισμάτων / κύριος ἀπάντων ὁ στρατηγὸς Μουσεὸς / ὃν ἡ φύσις κόσμησε λαμπραῖς ἀξίαις / φθόνος τ' ἀπέστω τῆς ἀρετῆς τῆς ψυχῆς. J. Russell, *The Mosaic Inscriptions of Anemurium* (Ergänzungsbande zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris 13, Vienna 1987), 39–49, no. 7; late fifth century.

³⁵ A. Ovadiāh, C. Gomez de Silva, S. Mucznik, 'The mosaic pavements of Sheikh Zouède in northern Sinai', in *Tesserae. Festschrift für Josef Engemann* (JAC Ergänzungsband 18, 1991), 181–91; for the text of the inscriptions (sometimes problematic) see E. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* (Paris 1969), 483–8, no. 122. The function of the building is not known, and the dates proposed have varied: in my opinion, it should be placed in the fifth or sixth century.

³⁶ See chs. 16, n. 46; 19, n. 26; Dunbabin, Dickie, *JAC* 26, 1983, 7–37. The second inscription, beside the sacrifice scene, runs: Παλλὰδὶ καὶ Μ[ι]ούσησι μάλα' εὐπλοκάμοισι Τύχῃ τε | Φοῖβῳ τε Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ Ἑρμῇ Μαριάδος υἱὸς | αὐτῷ σὺν βωμῷ Κράτερως καὶ

τοῦδε φίλος παῖς | ταῦτόν τε κρεῖον τε ἡδὲ φριξίαν ἔχονα κάπρον / λεπτήσιν λιθάδεσσιν συναρμόσαντες ἐθηκάν / τέχνης δαιδαλέης ἀναθήματα καὶ μερόπτεσσιν / εἰκόνας εὐσεβῆς ἑσορᾶν ἥς λῶιον οὐδέν.

³⁷ Similar donor inscriptions are also found on the mosaics of synagogues: see (briefly) J. Naveh, 'Ancient synagogue inscriptions' in L. Levine ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem 1981), 133–9.

³⁸ See J.-P. Caillet, 'Les dédicaces privées de pavements de mosaïque à la fin de l'Antiquité', in X. Barral i Altet ed., *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge*, 11, *Commande et travail* (Paris 1987), 15–38; Caillet, *L'Evergetisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges, d'après l'épigraphie des pavements de mosaïque (IVe–VIIe s.)* (CEFR 175, Rome 1993); for the Syrian churches, Donceel-Voûte 466–75.

³⁹ For the Latin inscriptions cf. P.-A. Février, 'La lettre et l'image', *CMGR* IV, 383–401, who compares also some of African secular inscriptions of the type cited in ns. 30, 32 above.

⁴⁰ Ὁ κεανὸν περίφαντον ἀπρίτον ἐνθα δέδορκας / γαῖαν μέσσον ἔχοντα σοφοῖς ἰνδάλμασι τέχνης / πάντα πέριξ φορέουσιν ὅσα πνίει τε καὶ ἔρπει / Δουμειτίου κτέανον μεγαθύμου ἀρχιερέως. E. Kitzinger, *DOP* 6, 1951, 83–122, esp. 100–2; above, ch. 12, n. 35. On the role of ecclesiastical patrons, see also H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park/London, 1987).

⁴¹ Gerasa: above, ch. 11, n. 23. Deir el-'Adas: above, ch. 10, n. 52. Kissufim: R. Cohen, 'A Byzantine Church and its Mosaic Floors', in Y. Tsafir

ed., *Ancient Churches Revealed* (Jerusalem 1993), 277–82; A. Ovadiāh, S. Mucznik, 'The mosaic pavement of Kissufim, Israel', *Homages Stern* 273–80, pl. CLXXXIV.1. The portraits presumably of donors in the Cathedral at Aquileia (ch. 4, n. 45) are an earlier example of the same phenomenon, unusual in the west: Caillet, *L'Evergetisme* (cit. n. 38), 141.

⁴² Caillet, *ibid.*, 218–57; 435–65. A typical example runs *Iohannis lect(or) cum matre sua Agneta fecit p(edes) XXV: ibid.* 241–2 no. 30 (=CIL V 1589). The church was consecrated in AD 579.

V

We have very little idea what mosaics cost. The maximum daily wages laid down for mosaicists in Diocletian's Price Edict, discussed in chapter 16, are no higher than those for many other craftsmen, and substantially lower than those for painters.⁴³ However, even if we could be certain that these had any significance beyond the immediate date and place at which the Edict was issued, it would still leave too many other questions unclear: who paid for the materials? How many days' work was needed to lay mosaics? How large was the typical team? Generalisation is clearly impossible. In the Classical and Hellenistic periods and in late Republican Italy, mosaic pavements were a luxury, as is shown both by their comparative rarity and by comments and anecdotes in literary sources.⁴⁴ Under the Empire the typical examples of luxury attacked by moralists become marble revetments and *opus sectile* or the mosaics of walls and vaults, rather than mosaic pavements; and the much wider diffusion of floor mosaics shows that they must have moved several notches down the social and economic scale. The more mass-produced character of the mosaics of the Imperial period, especially in Italy and the western provinces, has been pointed out several times in previous chapters; it must reflect increased demand, but at the same time must have cut the costs of production. When the options might range from simple black-and-white geometric designs to elaborate polychrome figured scenes, selection depended not only on the skills of the craftsmen but also on the economic capacities of the clients.

Nevertheless, mosaics remained a mark of wealth and prestige throughout the whole period examined; inscriptions of the type quoted in the previous paragraphs make this abundantly clear. Payment for mosaics to be laid in a

public building was a benefaction which justified its author in drawing attention to the gift. In the small town of Thibursicu Bure in Africa Proconsularis, an inscription (on stone) dated AD 260–2 records that a group of the decurions (city councillors) subscribed the sum of 41,200 sesterces for the mosaics in the Baths of Gallienus, while the rest of the costs of restoration came from public funds. Since we have no idea of the size of the baths or the extent of the mosaics the figure is not very informative. The sum is a substantial amount, as much as is often recorded for the cost of a complete building, though it is difficult to judge the effects of inflation at this date.⁴⁵ The term used for the mosaics, *musaeum*, probably indicates that the reference is to wall and vault mosaics, likely to be both more expensive and more prestigious. But there was no shortage of inscriptions recording benefactions whose donors wished it to be known that they had paid for pavement mosaics too, even if they did not specify the exact sum.

Finally the church (and synagogue) mosaics of late antiquity, discussed in the previous section, very occasionally contain a reference to the amount contributed; the sums given range from half a gold *solidus* to as much as four or five *solidi*. Attempts have been made to correlate these sums with the area to which they refer, and therefore to work out a cost per square metre (applicable at the dates concerned), but the results are very hypothetical, since the evidence is far from clear; a rate of one third of a *solidus* per square metre for geometric pavements, two-thirds for figured, has been suggested.⁴⁶ More informative than such calculations are the indications that comparatively humble members of society might be able to contribute about fifteen or twenty-five feet of mosaic (equivalent to 1.35–2.25 m square); but to pave a whole building remained a task requiring substantial investment.

calculate the possible cost per square metre of the mosaic on the basis of comparison with the area of mosaic pavement in the contemporary baths at Thugga does not work, since the inscription almost certainly refers to wall and vault mosaic.

⁴⁶ J.-P. Caillet, 'Le prix de la mosaïque de pavement (IVe–VIe s.)', *CMGR* vi, 409–14; Caillet, *L'Evergétisme* (cit. n.38), 430–3. On the 'economics of donation' in the early Byzantine period generally, see M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures* (Baltimore 1986), 11–13.

⁴³ Ch.16, n.39.

⁴⁴ E.g. Galen, *Protrept.*9 (Kühn i, 19), the story of the cynic philosopher Diogenes in the fourth century BC, visiting a house whose floor was decorated with images of the gods fitted together of varied stones (or pebbles), and unable to find a place to spit; also Varro, *R.R.*3.2.4, for *emblema aut lithostrotum* as examples of typical villa luxury in the first century BC.

⁴⁵ *ILAFr* 506; R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire* (2nd edn, Cambridge 1982), 66, 93 no.64. Duncan-Jones' attempt (115) to

Conclusions

LINKS AND parallels between mosaics and other media of Greek and Roman art have been noted many times throughout this book. The decorative repertory used on mosaics was closely related to, and in part derived from, that used in textiles, stucco, painting, and architectural ornament. Figure scenes and individual figures may be derived from famous works of painting or sculpture, if often at many removes. Relief sculpture and luxury metal work also draw, more loosely, on the same repertory of motifs, as do humbler works such as lamps and relief pottery. A relationship with illustrated manuscripts has been proposed, though it is problematic. At the same time, the art of mosaic possesses its own specific characteristics. Except in the case of movable *emblemata*, mosaics are part of a building, serving an essential practical function. Their character is inescapably affected by their location in a building, and in the case of pavement mosaics by their location on the floor. Practical considerations of firmness, levelness, resistance to wear governed their construction; the shape and function of the space to be decorated affected their lay-out; and they were seen obliquely and from a certain distance, often by viewers who were in motion. The materials available dictated not only the range of colours, but also the degree of gradation possible within each colour. The technique of juxtaposing tiny pieces of material which always remain distinct, however fine the setting, also imparts its own character, though the response of the craftsmen might vary from seeing this as a challenge to be negated as far as possible, to exploiting the particular opportunities that the technique offers.

This concluding chapter will look at some aspects of

the relationship between mosaic and the other arts, and at the part played at different periods or in different contexts by its more idiosyncratic characteristics. The focus will be on pavement mosaics; the relationship between wall mosaic and painting was discussed in chapter 14.

Several scholars have seen the evolution of mosaics in antiquity as a conflict between two concepts of a mosaic: as a picture on the floor and as a two-dimensional decoration of the floor surface.¹ The first of these implies close connections between mosaic and painting, which have figured on numerous occasions in this book. Earlier generations of scholars tended to concentrate on this aspect of mosaic to the exclusion of all others: figured mosaic was discussed, either as a peculiar subspecies of painting, or as a source of information about lost Greek paintings. It is clear that the concept of mosaic as an imitation of painting in a more lasting medium was familiar at certain periods in antiquity also. Pliny opens his chapters on mosaics by describing mosaic pavements among the (Hellenistic) Greeks as 'artistically embellished in the manner of painting'.² The Alexander mosaic is indisputably a copy of a famous painting; and examples of the same original reproduced more or less closely in both painting and mosaic occur more than once in the Campanian cities.³ Even more telling is the way in which the artists who created many of the finest Hellenistic mosaics in the *vermiculatum* technique not only used paint to tint the mortar of the interstices, thereby disguising precisely the discontinuity that is the essential characteristic of mosaics, but even on occasion painted the surface of the tesserae in order to enhance the colour.⁴

In the Hellenistic period, therefore, there can be no

found in the *emblema* signed by Dioskourides of Samos and also in a painting from Stabiae (above, ch.18, n.51; for the Stabiae painting see *Collezioni Napoli* 156–7, no.246); or the wall mosaic with Achilles on Skyros from the House of Apollo at Pompeii (v1 7.23), which gives a slightly simplified version of the composition found also in paintings from Pompeii v1 9.6 (House of Dioscuri) and ix 5.2 (*Collezioni Napoli* 152–3, nos.205, 206; cf. above, ch.14, n.31; ch.18, n.46).

⁴ Cf. Guimier-Sorbets, Nenna, *BCH* 116, 1992, 607–31, esp.625–7; above, ch.2, n.42.

¹ For this approach, see Lavin, 'Hunting mosaics'; Ph. Bruneau, *La mosaïque antique* (Paris 1987).

² *H.N.*36.184: *pavimenta originem apud Graecos habent elaborata arte picturae ratione*; cf. Donderer, *JdI* 102, 1987, 366–8, who concludes rightly that *pavimenta* must refer specifically to tessellated mosaics. However Pliny's famous phrase in *H.N.*35.3, *coepimus et lapide pingere*, refers to *opus sectile*; above, ch.15, n.36. The Latin word *pingere* is used to mean both 'to paint' and 'to depict in mosaic', but also 'to embroider'.

³ For example the scene from the *Theophoroumene* of Menander

doubt that the finest workers in mosaic were setting themselves deliberately to create works which, whether or not they were actually based on paintings, were aiming to emulate the technique and rival the effects proper to painting. Since the highest achievements of painting were thought to lie in naturalism, this meant that the mosaicists were aiming to possess the same range of tones, and the same fine nuances, that could be attained by mixing paint, and to render convincingly perspective, foreshortening, and pictorial depth. The aim is already perceptible in the pebble mosaics of Pella, but is carried much further in the Hellenistic mosaics in *vermiculatum*; the palette of Hellenistic painters had itself greatly expanded, placing further demands on their imitators.⁵ As the painters made new advances, rendering for instance the reflections on a surface or setting their figures in a landscape, the mosaicists (the best of them at least) followed suit. Given the almost total loss of Hellenistic major painting, we must in fact deduce its achievements to a substantial degree from these mosaics, along with the occasional reflections of it in wall painting or the minor arts, or in what are assumed to be later copies.

The concept of the mosaic as picture continued long after the Hellenistic period. Panels, large or small, designed as autonomous scenes set off from the rest of the floor (though no longer manufactured separately) are found in many parts of the Roman world for several centuries thereafter. They include examples of quality as high as the cosmological mosaic from Augusta Emerita (Mérida), in Lusitania (figure 153); the allegorical mosaic and others from Shahba-Philippopolis in Syria/Arabia (figure 174); or the mosaic of the Musicians from Mariamin, also in Syria, from the late fourth century AD (figure 178). They no longer use the minuscule tesserae characteristic of the *vermiculatum* technique, which permitted almost the imitation of the painter's brushstrokes; nor do they colour the mortar or in other respects try to disguise the nature of the medium. Nevertheless they are designed according to the principles of a panel painting, with a single viewpoint, spatial depth and a coherent setting; figures and landscape elements are naturalistically modelled and coloured.

Contemporary paintings of this quality are entirely lost

to us. Literary sources attest to the existence of a highly regarded tradition of panel painting in the High Empire, but, unless we take as reliable the rhetorical *ekphraseis* of Philostratos the elder, written around AD 200, which purport to describe a visit to a picture gallery, we get little indication of their character. The mosaics of the type just described give us better evidence that a highly naturalistic pictorial tradition of great sophistication persisted, especially though not exclusively in the eastern empire, and lasted as late as the fourth century AD. We cannot, however, evaluate with any accuracy the relationship between the mosaics and hypothetical paintings, contemporary or not. Some of the pictorial mosaics may copy actual paintings, but this should not be assumed automatically; some may well be new creations designed specifically to be executed in mosaic. Still less should it be assumed that, if mosaics do copy paintings, these were necessarily famous paintings of the Hellenistic period. We can, however, be certain that the more complicated scenes in mosaic must have been based on detailed preliminary drawings, so that in this respect at least the work of the painter/drawer and that of the mosaicist continued to be inextricably entwined.

The paintings that do survive from the Roman Empire are predominantly wall, rather than panel, paintings; they come from the interior decoration of houses, especially in the Campanian cities, and to a lesser extent from tombs. These show little connection with the decoration of floor mosaics, except insofar as such paintings also made use of independent pictorial panels. The complex structural systems of Campanian wall painting find no reflection in contemporary floor mosaics. There is only limited overlap in the decorative repertory, and much of this concerns motifs and compositions that were current also in other media, such as architecture and stucco.⁶ While very close links evidently existed between mural painters and the designers of wall mosaics, at least in the first century AD, the occasional parallels with floor mosaics do not suggest a great degree of symbiosis or co-operation.⁷

The alternative concept of mosaic is as two-dimensional decoration of the floor surface. The development of this concept and the relationship of mosaic in this role to other decorative media have been discussed at various

paintings found in Britain, which imitate mosaic not only in their design (a border of guilloche), but even in the rendering of imitation tesserae; the best known example is from a villa at Sparsholt: N. Davey, R. Ling, *Wall-Painting in Roman Britain* (Gloucester 1982), 158–9; Barbet, 'Quelques rapports' (cit.n.6), 50.

points in this book. Textiles may have contributed to the early development of mosaics in Greece, but there can be little doubt that the great expansion of decorative mosaics that took place in Italy in the first centuries BC and AD was essentially an autonomous development. New patterns and compositions were drawn from a variety of sources, but their adaptation to the pavement and their subsequent elaboration were the work of the mosaicists themselves. The same may be said of the extraordinary wealth of ornamental compositions that flourished throughout the empire for the following three or four centuries. Some, however, of the new patterns that appeared in late antiquity, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, suggest a much closer interdependence at this time between the makers of textiles and the mosaicists. The 'floral carpet' designs of *semis* and trellis, found so frequently in Syria and Palestine from the fifth century onwards, can be convincingly seen as imitations of woven silks with similar patterns.⁸ Yet it must also be noted that both patterns have precedents within the medium of mosaic itself; the new models are assimilated naturally, not imposed artificially from outside.

Parallels between late antique textiles and mosaics are not confined to ornamental patterns; a number of figured textiles, some fairly recently discovered, show similarities with mosaics both in the repertory and in methods of composition. One example is a linen wall hanging apparently from Hermoupolis Magna (Ashmunein) in Egypt, decorated with hunting scenes around a shrine of Artemis, within a scroll border. It recalls to a remarkable degree some of the hunting mosaics of North Africa, above all the early fifth-century mosaic from Carthage known as the 'Offering of the Crane', but has connections also with some of the Antioch hunting mosaics.⁹ Further parallels exist with metalware of the same period, approximately fourth to fifth century, ornamented with inlaid and engraved decoration. The resemblances here too consist not only in the use of a very similar iconographic repertory, but also in methods of composition, whereby figures and landscape elements are distributed over the surface or arranged in registers. As examples, among

many, may be cited the silver Hunting Plate from the Sevso Treasure, with its scene of the hunters' picnic surrounded by hunting scenes in a landscape; or an inlaid bronze jug now in Berlin, again with hunting scenes spread over the whole surface.¹⁰ Beyond the specific parallels between these various media lies a related current of taste: a figure-scene is conceived as a two-dimensional decoration, to be adapted freely to the surface to be decorated; motifs consisting of individual figures or small self-contained groups are juxtaposed, often with minimal relation to one another; strong colour contrasts oppose predominantly flat areas, while detail depends upon graphic linear effects; ornament plays a conspicuous role.

More specific to mosaic are some of the changes in chromatic effects that follow the abandonment of the classical imitation of painting with its careful modulation and grading of shades. While linearity and contrasts of flat areas of colour are common to many other media – including, indeed, much late antique painting – , certain effects are peculiar to the mosaic technique: for instance, the 'pointillistic' use of contrasting tesserae. Also peculiar to mosaic is the exploitation for effect of the lines in which rows of tesserae are set, the so-called 'worklines'. The use of worklines to model and suggest the volume of parts of a figure is found quite frequently on floor mosaics in the later empire, though they never developed this procedure as far as the wall mosaics of the Byzantine period. More characteristic still is the use made of such worklines to enhance certain ornamental designs, for example the imbrication patterns where the tesserae of the background themselves are set to form a series of scales. Monochrome examples of this technique are found at Pompeii as early as the first century AD, though it reaches its fullest development in the late Empire.¹¹ It is used above all with the floral *semis* common in the eastern Mediterranean, whose relationship with woven silk patterns was discussed above: a pattern derived from (or closely related to) another medium, but executed in a technique peculiar to mosaic.¹²

Many of the broader changes that have just been discussed are part of the general shift from the classical

⁵ Guimier-Sorbets, Nenna, *BCH* 119, 1995, 529–63.

⁶ Cf. A. Barbet, 'Quelques rapports entre mosaïques et peintures murales à l'époque romaine', in *Hommages Stern*, 51–3; cf. also above, ch.4, n.9; ch.18, ns.6–8.

⁷ A peculiar and isolated exception is given by some fragments of wall

⁸ Cf. A. Gonosová, *DOP* 41, 1987, 227–37; above ch.10, ns.34–9.

⁹ F. Baratte, 'Héros et chasseurs: la tenture d'Artémis de la Fondation Abegg à Riggisberg', *Mon Piot* 67, 1985, 31–76, esp.64–76. Carthage mosaic, above ch.7, n.68; Antioch, ch.10, n.44.

¹⁰ Cf. Baratte, *ibid.*, esp.62, 72; J.W. Salomonson, 'Kunstgeschichtliche und ikonographische Untersuchungen zu einem Tonfragment der Sammlung Benaki in Athen', *BABesch* 48, 1973, 32–40, 75–82; M.

Mundell Mango, A. Bennett, *The Sevso Treasure*, part 1 (*JRA* suppl.12, Ann Arbor 1994), 55–97.

¹¹ X. Barral i Altet, *XIII Congreso Nacional de Arqueología, Huelva 1973* (Zaragoza 1975), 929–32; above, ch.9, n.33.

¹² Above, n.8; cf. ch.10, n.36 (mosaic of the Phoenix, Antioch); ch.11, n.15 (Shavei Zion church, nave).

aesthetic to that of late antiquity and are accordingly common to many media. To what extent the mosaicists may have taken the lead in developing new decorative concepts cannot be resolved, but it is tempting to suggest that they may have played an important part. The particular demands of the medium, and the challenges inherent in devising a decoration suitable for a floor surface, may well have stimulated new solutions and approaches. Indeed to some extent the emphasis on surface decoration constitutes a return to the principles of design followed in the early pebble mosaics. From this point of view, the attempt by the mosaicists to imitate both the composition and the style of painting may be seen rather as constituting an aberration, in that it forced the medium to adapt to demands to which it is by nature ill suited. The immense

vitality of the classical tradition ensured a long survival of the concept of mosaic as picture once it had been introduced, but it was always unnatural to the medium. From this standpoint, it is not surprising that the majority of craftsmen working in what had become a common and widely diffused technique should seek to work out decorative solutions better adapted to their medium.

Changes of taste, while easy to document, do not allow simple explanations. The demands and expectations of patrons stimulate and are in turn modified by the traditions and skills of craftsmen. Materials and costs also impose their limitations. The long evolution of ancient mosaics illustrates for us better than any other pictorial medium from antiquity the interaction of these conflicting yet invigorating forces.

Maps



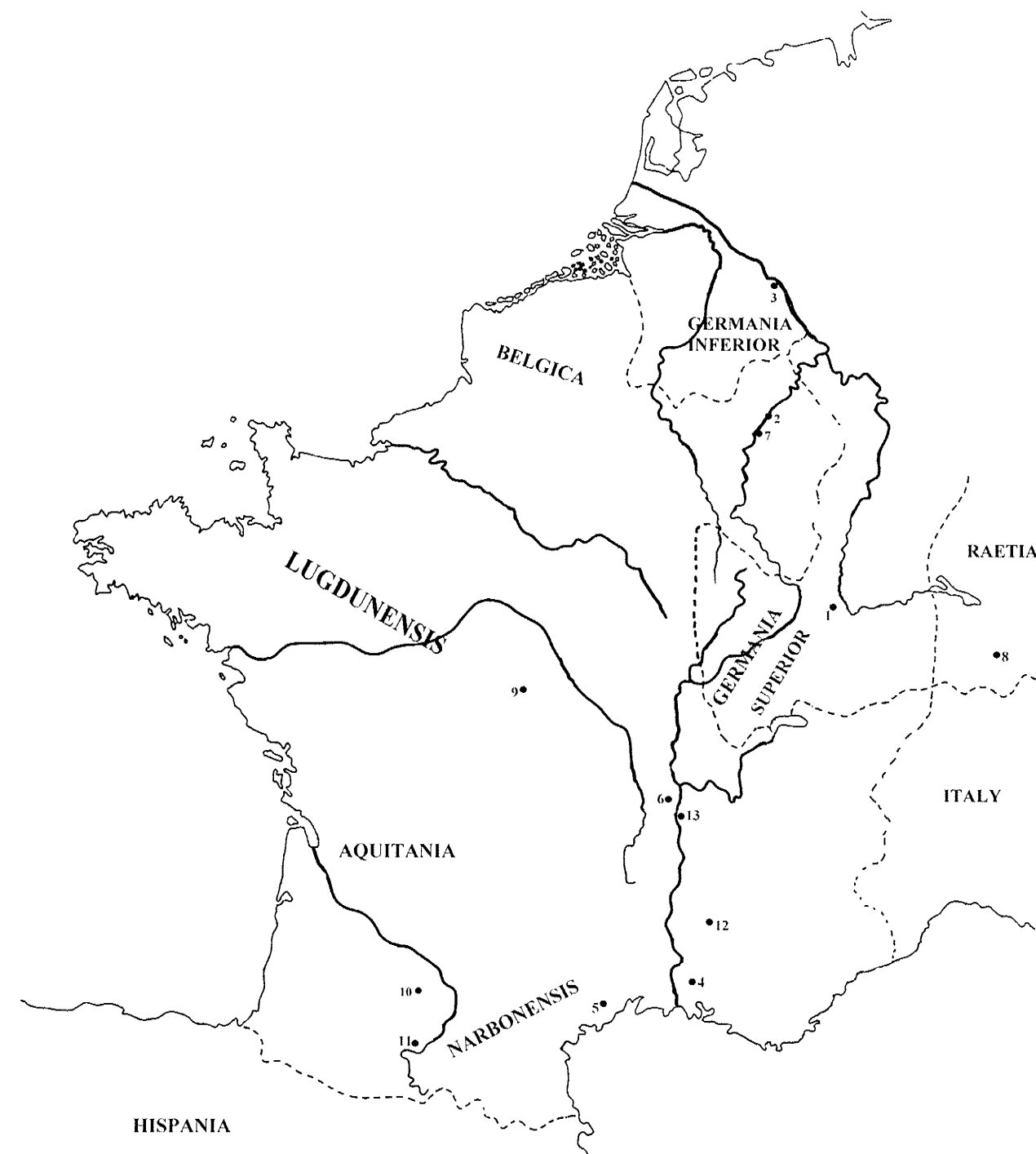
Map 1 Greece and Asia Minor

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Argos | 12 Iasos | 23 Olynthos |
| 2 Athens | 13 Isthmia | 24 Patrai/Patras |
| 3 Constantinople | 14 Kenchreai | 25 Pella |
| 4 Corinth | 15 Kephallonia | 26 Pergamon |
| 5 Delos | 16 Knossos | 27 Rhodes |
| 6 Delphi | 17 Kos | 28 Samos |
| 7 Ephesos | 18 Lebena | 29 Sikyon |
| 8 Epidamnos/Dyrrhachion | 19 Lykosoura | 30 Sparta |
| 9 Eretria | 20 Mytilene | 31 Thessalonica/Thessaloniki |
| 10 Erythrai | 21 Nikopolis | 32 Tiryns |
| 11 Halicarnassus | 22 Olympia | 33 Vergina/Aigai |



Map 2 Italy and Sicily

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Aquileia | 11 Lilybaeum/Marsala | 21 Privernum |
| 2 Agrigentum/Agrigento | 12 Lucus Feroniae | 22 Rome |
| 3 Arpi | 13 Morgantina | 23 Selinus/Selinunte |
| 4 Baiae | 14 Motya | 24 Soluntum |
| 5 Desenzano | 15 Ostia | 25 Sperlonga |
| 6 Formiae | 16 Panormus/Palermo | 26 Stabiae |
| 7 Helorus/Tellaro | 17 Patti Marina | 27 Syracuse |
| 8 Herculaneum | 18 Piazza Armerina | 28 Tauromenium/Taormina |
| 9 Lake Nemi | 19 Pompeii | 29 Tibur/Tivoli |
| 10 Lauro di Nola | 20 Praeneste/Palestrina | 30 Tyndaris/Tyndari |



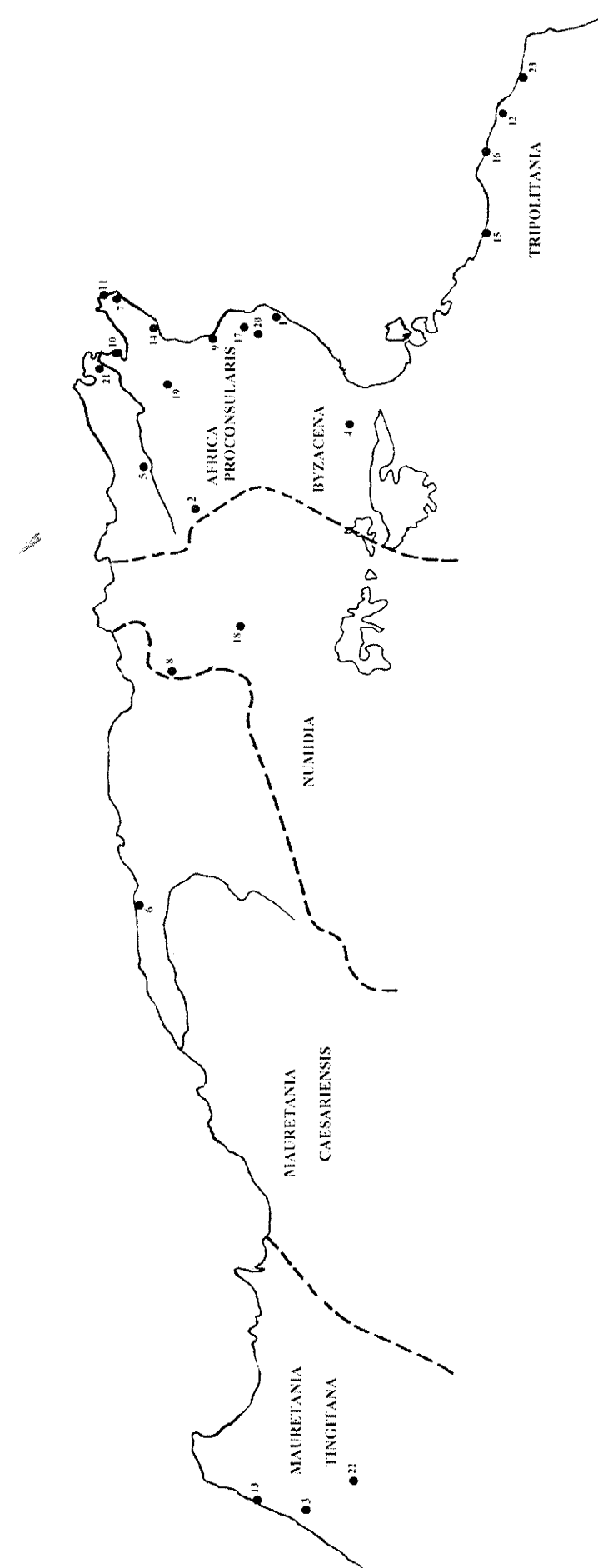
Map 3 Gaul and the Germanies

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 Augusta Raurica/Augst | 8 Orbe |
| 2 Augusta Treverorum/Trier | 9 Ouzouër-sur-Trézée (Loiret) |
| 3 Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippensium/Cologne | 10 Séviac (Gers) |
| 4 Glanum/Saint-Rémy-de-Provence | 11 Valence-sur-Baïse (Gers) |
| 5 Loupian (Hérault) | 12 Vasio/Vaison-la-Romaine |
| 6 Lugdunum/Lyons | 13 Vienna/Vienne |
| 7 Nennig | |



Map 4 Britain

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Brading (Isle of Wight) | 8 Hinton St Mary | 15 Newton St. Loe |
| 2 Camulodunum/Colchester | 9 Horkstow | 16 Petuaria/Brough-on-Humber |
| 3 Corinium/Cirencester | 10 Isca/Exeter | 17 Rudston |
| 4 Durnovaria/Dorchester | 11 Isurium Brigantum/Aldborough | 18 Verulamium/St Albans |
| 5 Durobrivae/Water Newton | 12 Londinium/London | 19 Withington |
| 6 Fishbourne | 13 Low Ham | 20 Woodchester |
| 7 Frampton | 14 Lullingstone | |



Map 5 North Africa

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Acholla | 9 Hadrumetum/Sousse | 17 Smitat |
| 2 Althiburus | 10 Karthago/Carthage | 18 Thamugadi/Timgad |
| 3 Banasa | 11 Kerkouane | 19 Thuburbo Maius |
| 4 Batten Zamour (Talh) | 12 Lepcis Magna | 20 Thysdrus/El Djem |
| 5 Bulla Regia | 13 Lixus | 21 Ulica |
| 6 Caesarea/Cherchel | 14 Neapolis/Nabeul | 22 Volubilis |
| 7 Clupea/Kélibia | 15 Sabrathia | 23 Zliten |
| 8 Cuicul/Djemila | 16 Silin | |



Map 6 Iberian peninsula

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Augusta Emerita/Mérida | 9 Conimbriga |
| 2 Baetulo/Badalona | 10 Emporiae/Ampurias |
| 3 Barcino/Barcelona | 11 Italica |
| 4 Carranque | 12 Marbella |
| 5 Carthago Nova/Cartagena | 13 Pedrosa de la Vega |
| 6 Cástulo | 14 Santisteban del Puerto |
| 7 Centcelles | 15 Tarraco/Tarragona |
| 8 Complutum/Alcalá de Henares | |



Map 7 Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Cyprus

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Antioch-on-the-Orontes | 12 Jerusalem | 23 Nebo/Khirbet el-Mukhayyat |
| 2 Apamea-on-the-Orontes | 13 <i>Kastron Mefaa</i> /Umm al-Rasas | 24 Palmyra |
| 3 Beth Alpha | 14 Khirbet el-Mafjar | 25 Salamis |
| 4 Deir el-'Adas | 15 <i>Kourion</i> | 26 Sarrin in Osrhoene |
| 5 Edessa/Urfa | 16 Ma'ale Adummim/Khirbet el-Murassas | 27 <i>Scythopolis</i> /Beth Shean/Beisan |
| 6 'En-Gedi | 17 Madaba | 28 <i>Sepphoris Diocaesarea</i> |
| 7 Et-Tabgha | 18 Ma'in | 29 Shahba-Philippopolis |
| 8 Gaza | 19 Ma'on/Nirim | 30 Shavei Zion |
| 9 Gerasa/Jerash | 20 Mariamin | 31 Tel Anafa |
| 10 Hammath Tiberias | 21 Masada | |
| 11 Jericho | 22 Nea Paphos | |



Map 8 The east

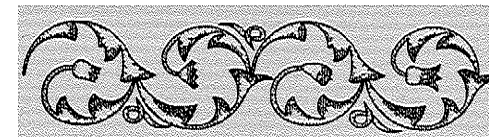
- 1 Ai Khanoum
- 2 Alexandria
- 3 Arsameia on the Nymphaios

- 4 Bishapur
- 5 Chersonnesos (Crimea)
- 6 Cyrene

- 7 Gordion
- 8 Olbia
- 9 Thmuis

Glossary of ornamental patterns

acanthus scroll



awning pattern



bead-and-reel



boxes, perspective



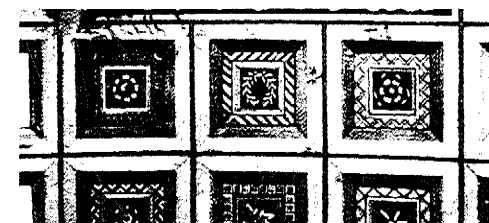
cable



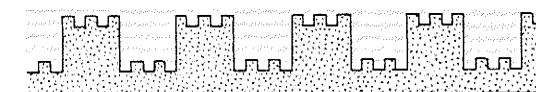
chevrons



coffers



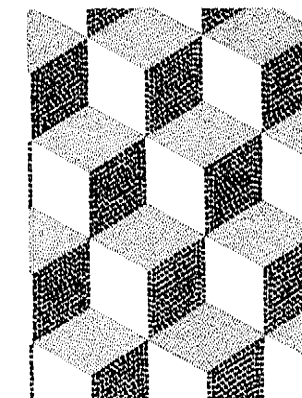
crenellation



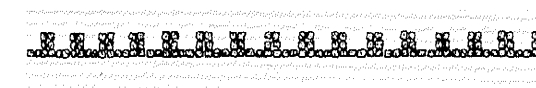
crowstep



cubes, perspective



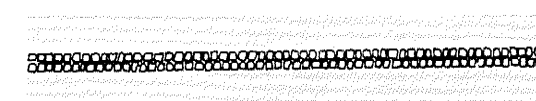
dentilled band



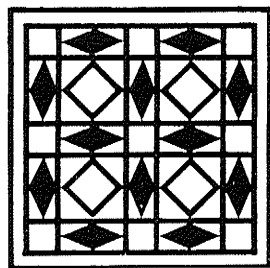
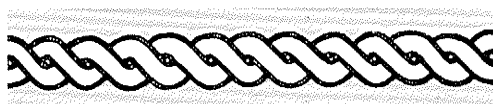
dentils, perspective



fillet



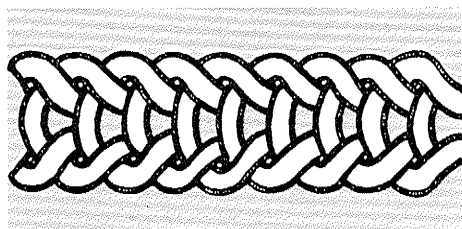
grid

guilloche
(a) simple

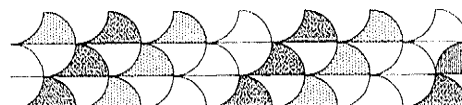
(b) three-strand



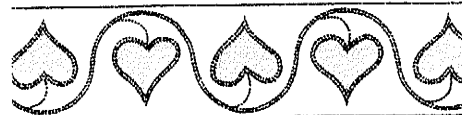
(c) chain



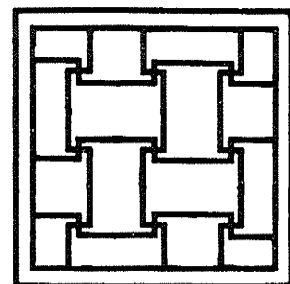
imbrication



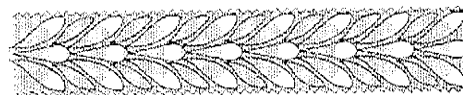
ivy scroll



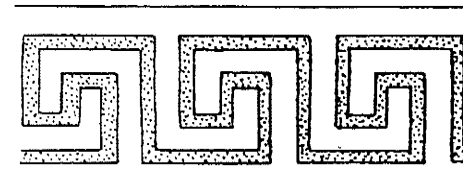
key-pattern



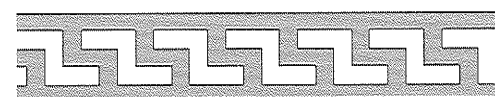
laurel wreath



lotus-band

lozenge, *see* starmaeander
(a) simple

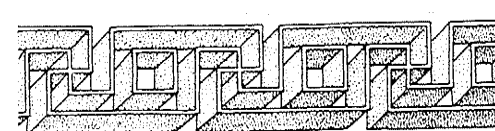
(b) broken



(c) swastika



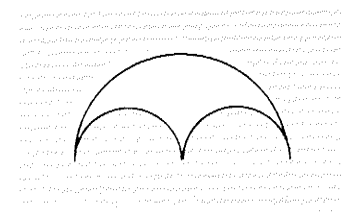
(d) perspective



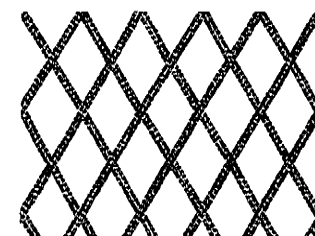
palmette-frieze



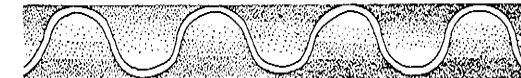
pelta



reticulate



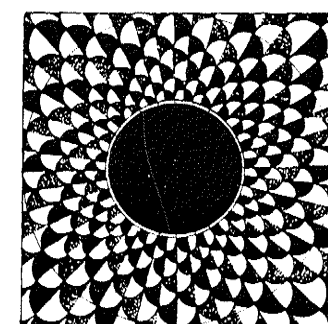
ribbon (wavy)



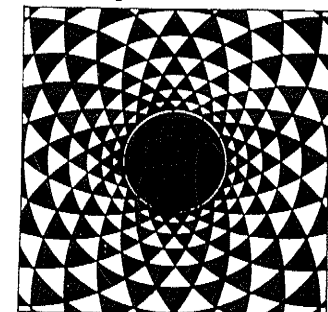
scroll



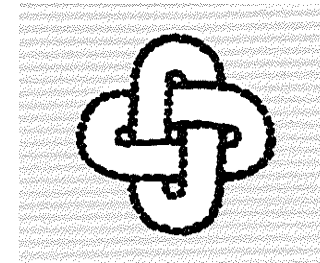
shield of imbrications



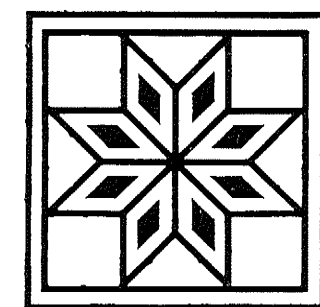
shield of triangles



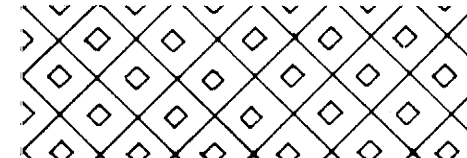
Solomon knot



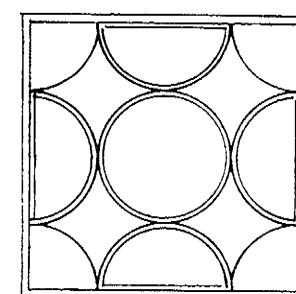
star of lozenges

stepped triangles, *see* crowstep

trellis



vault-pattern



wave-band



General glossary

This glossary is designed to explain the way in which terms are used in this book. Many of them have other uses, which are not employed here.

aedicula A small shrine; a pedimented architectural feature resembling a shrine.
africano Marble from Teos, multi-coloured, with predominantly red or orange flecks on a grey/black ground.
ala (Latin 'wing') A wide alcove opening off either side of the atrium in a Roman house of Pompeian type.
andron (pl. *andrones*) The dining-room of a Greek house, square or rectangular, sometimes with a raised band for the dining-couches around three-and-a-half sides.
arabesque Decorative design of flowing lines enriched with vegetal forms and tendrils.
asarotos oikos (Greek 'unswept room') A mosaic attributed to Sosos of Pergamon (cf. chapter 2), representing the debris of a meal; the same theme on later mosaics.
atrium The central hall of a Roman house of Pompeian type, usually with an opening in the roof and an *impluvium* in the centre; in Christian architecture, an open courtyard in front of a church.
basilica A covered hall, usually with interior columns, used as a law-court or for other public purposes; a room in a grand private house, often with an apse at the end, used as an audience chamber; in Christian architecture, a rectangular church, usually divided by columns into nave and side aisles, and with an apse at the end.
caldarium The hot room in Roman baths.
cantharus, see *kantharos*
carceres Starting gates in a Roman circus.
carpet-pattern An all-over design, usually repetitive, covering a substantial area without formal division; also 'animal carpet', with animals distributed freely over the surface, without a continuous setting.
cella The cultchamber of a Roman temple.
Chi-Rho Monogram formed by the first two letters of the name of Christ in Greek.
chip-pavement Pavement composed of unshaped pieces of marble or limestone set into mortar.
cipollino Marble with green and white stripes like an onion-skin, from Carystos in Euboea.
compositional schema Underlying geometric structure of an ornamental pattern.
crater Bowl for mixing wine and water; wide-mouthed bowl, usually with handles and a foot, frequently used as decorative motif.

crotalon Musical instrument in the form of clappers on long handle.
crusta Irregular fragment of limestone or marble, usually coloured, set into surface of mortar pavement or tessellated mosaic; also slab of marble used for veneer on wall.
cryptoporticus Subterranean or partially buried passage-way.
cubiculum A bedroom in a Roman house, used for relaxation as well as for sleeping.
dominus (Latin) Lord, master.
domina (Latin) Lady, mistress.
edging-band Plain strip around circumference of room outside main decorated area of mosaic.
Egyptian blue Blue beads or pellets of artificial pigment.
emblema A self-contained panel worked separately and set into the centre of mosaic or other form of pavement.
Erotes Winged children or youthful figures.
exedra Open-fronted recess, semi-circular or rectangular in plan.
faience Glazed siliceous paste, blue or green, of Egyptian origin.
fauces Narrow entrance passage in Roman house of Pompeian type.
frigidarium The cold room in Roman baths.
garum Sauce made from rotting fish, much appreciated by the Romans.
giallo antico Numidian marble, from Simitthus (Chemtou) in Africa Proconsularis, yellow sometimes with red veins.
ichthyocentaur Mythical creature with human forepart, horse's front legs and fish-tail.
impluvium A basin in the centre of the atrium in a Roman house of Pompeian type, to catch rainwater entering through the opening in the roof.
insula Multiple-dwelling apartment block; block of buildings in city between four streets.
kantharos Wide-mouthed cup with handles, frequently used as decorative motif.
koine Language common to wide area of diverse background; hence an artistic style similarly diffused and accepted over wide area.
lamination Thin rectangular strip of stone.
lavapesta Pavement of mortar and aggregate with substantial admixture of lava.
martyrium(-on) Memorial church built over saint's place of burial or martyrdom, or housing his/her relics.
metae Turning posts in a Roman circus.

Mithraeum Shrine of the god Mithras.
multiple decor Design based on grid forming numerous small panels filled with wide range of different ornamental patterns.
musivarius, museiarius Worker in mosaic, usually wall and vault mosaic.
musivum Wall and vault mosaic.
narthex Entrance porch of church.
Nilometer Instrument for measuring the height of the annual flood of the Nile.
nucleus Upper layer of foundations for mosaic or sectile pavement, composed of fine mortar mixed with crushed tile or potsherds.
nymphaeum Decorative fountain, sometimes in cave or artificial grotto, later often free-standing structure.
oecus In Hellenistic houses, main reception room opening off peristyle (also 'broadroom'); in Roman houses, large reception room with interior colonnade, probably used for dining (also Corinthian *oecus*, *oecus-triclinium*).
officina Workshop.
opus (Latin 'work') Term used in combination with various other Latin words to identify types of construction. Not all of these are genuine ancient terms. See also *musivum*, *signinum*, *tessellatum*.
opus figlinum (Latin 'ceramic work') Type of pavement formed from squares of pottery or terracotta, set flat or on edge.
opus mixtum Type of masonry combining brickwork with areas of *opus reticulatum* q.v.
opus reticulatum Type of masonry consisting of concrete core faced with pyramidal stones set so that the bases display a regular network on the exposed face.
opus sectile Type of pavement or wall revetment formed from pieces of marble or other materials cut to the specific shapes of a design, and fitted together to form a smooth surface.
palaestra Exercise ground, often connected with baths.
palombino A grey-white fine-grained limestone, used in *opus sectile*.
pavonazzetto A white marble with purple veins from Docimium near Synnada in Phrygia.
porphyry, green A very hard green granite from Laconia, sometimes inaccurately called 'serpentine'.
porphyry, red A very hard dark-red or purple granite, from the Mons Porphyrites (Djebel Dokhan) in Egypt.
portasanta A reddish marble varied with grey and white hues from Chios.
protome Term used to describe the forepart of an animal used in decorative designs.
quadriga Chariot drawn by four horses.
rainbow style Ornamental style whereby lines of tesserae each of a single colour are set diagonally: see figure 168.
rosso antico A red marble from Taenarum.
rudus Middle layer of foundations for mosaic or sectile pavement, composed of a mix of rubble and lime.

scaenae frons Back wall of the Graeco-Roman stage, often with lavish architectural decoration.
semis Decorative system whereby motifs, simple or floral, are strewn over the ground without a formal framework.
setting-bed Thin layer of fine mortar above the *nucleus* into which tesserae are set.
sigma, see *stibadium*
signinum Pavement of mortar mixed with aggregate, usually crushed tile or pottery, plain or decorated with tesserae.
spandrel Triangular area at either side of the curve of an arch; on a pavement, area between the corners of a square and an inscribed circle.
spina Structure dividing the two longer tracks of the Roman circus.
statumen Lowest bedding layer of mosaic foundations, composed of fist-sized stones.
stibadium/sigma Horseshoe-shaped couch used for dining in the Imperial period, often with semi-circular table.
suture Seam between two sections of mosaic executed at different times or by different craftsmen.
tablinum Main room opening off atrium in Roman house of Pompeian type.
Tanit, sign of Name given to religious and magical symbol used in Punic and Phoenician culture.
terrazzo Pavement using small chips of white limestone.
tessellated Made of tesserae.
tessellatum Mosaic made of regular squared tesserae of cut stone etc., distinguished by their larger size from *vermiculatum* q.v.
tessera Piece of cut stone, but also of glass or other material, approximately cubic, forming the basic material of a mosaic.
thiasos Greek term used to describe principally the mythical followers of Dionysus, esp. maenads and satyrs; but sometimes the followers of other deities.
tholos Circular building with external columns, usually religious.
thyrsus Staff topped with pine cone, carried by Dionysus and his followers.
travertine A fine white limestone, used extensively for building in and around Rome.
triclinium Normal term for Roman dining-room, usually containing three couches along side and back walls.
triconch Room with three apses opening off side and back walls.
venatio, venator (Latin 'hunting', 'hunter') Terms used of hunts organised as spectacles in the amphitheatre or other locations.
vermiculatum Term for the finest technique of mosaic work, using very small tesserae, less than 4 millimetres square; often found in *emblemata*.
worklines Rows in which craftsmen lay tesserae.
xenia (Greek 'gifts between host and guest') Representation of groupings primarily of edible objects.

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